

# **STEP-BY-STEP**

## **2nd Ed.**

### **A GUIDE TO**

### **MOBILITY TECHNIQUES**

#### **STUDY GUIDE**

#### **GUIDING TECHNIQUES**

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## INTRODUCTION

Guiding techniques encompass one of the three primary modes of travel mentioned in the Step-by-Step Introduction file. When performing guiding techniques, one person takes the lead and guides another person through an area. The guide's role is to identify obstacles and hazards in the travel path and to guide the other person safely around them.

In times past, this set of techniques was often referred to as "sighted guide" techniques, based on the assumption that the guide would always be sighted. However, because people who have visual impairments often serve as guides for others who have visual impairments, the term "guide" was then adopted. This category of techniques is now referred to as "guiding techniques."

Guiding techniques are the primary means of travel for some people who are blind. This might be the case for some new travelers and/or for those who, due to reasons other than visual impairment, lack the ability to travel using other techniques. Yet even the most capable of travelers use guiding techniques from time to time. Travelers who are experienced and skilled in the use of a long cane and/or dog guide, for example, will often use guiding techniques in situations when it is, perhaps, just more convenient to do so, such as when trying to carry on a conversation with a friend while walking together.

Rather than implying a dependent mode of travel for people who are blind, guiding techniques can be viewed as an interactive partnership in travel. When traveling using guiding techniques, the guide does not pull the traveler along passively; rather, the traveler is an active partner in the travel. The traveler takes on equal responsibility for safe and efficient travel by doing such things as properly grasping the guide's arm and proper positioning his or her body in response to the guide's movement through different environments. Without equal participation of both partners, travel using guiding techniques is far less effective.

Guiding techniques are also not limited to use between the instructor and the traveler. For example, the traveler must be able to travel with other people. It is important, therefore, to teach family members, teachers, and significant others in the traveler's life how to perform these techniques. It is also important that the traveler learn to function as a guide for other people who are blind. Not only is this a very useful skill, it is one that can also be used to facilitate the traveler's understanding of the guide's role.

Furthermore, because most travelers are unlikely to have the luxury of always walking with a skilled guide, the traveler should know how to perform the guiding techniques when walking with an inexperienced guide. He or she should also know how to teach guiding techniques, when necessary, to inexperienced guides, such as friends, co-workers, or even the helpful person on the street. Doing so may call for teaching a wide

range of techniques. For example, when dealing with the Good Samaritan, all that may be needed is to tell the Good Samaritan that the traveler can follow the person's movement by simply holding onto his elbow. When teaching guiding techniques to family members or close friends with whom the traveler walks frequently, he or she may choose to instruct these significant others how to perform many, or all, of the guiding techniques, including those used to negotiate narrow spaces, stairs, and doors.

The guiding techniques are often among the first mobility techniques taught to new travelers. Due to their cooperative nature, these techniques enable the new traveler to be mobile but do not require the traveler to take full responsibility for safe or efficient travel. These techniques also lay a foundation upon which the instructor and the traveler can develop a positive rapport and a relationship built on trust (Jacobson, 2013). Having said this, however, it must be emphasized that it is not absolutely necessary to teach guiding techniques before teaching other techniques of independent travel, such as use of the long cane. In fact, many professionals who teach mobility feel that guiding techniques should be taught toward the end of a traveler's instructional program. It is felt that, by sequencing instruction in this way, the immediate experience of free and independent travel reinforces new travelers' confidence in their ability to travel on their own.

When teaching guiding techniques, there are a few principles that all instructors should keep in mind. While these are not necessarily given in any specific order, they are some of the most common teaching tips and suggestions that have been handed down from generation to generation of O&M specialists.

- Simple courtesies extended to the traveler should never be overlooked. For example, before touching a person who is blind to initiate physical contact for the BASIC GUIDING technique, it is considered polite to ask the traveler if she would like to take your arm or to walk together using this technique. While this verbal introduction is sometimes omitted in familiar situations when the traveler expects contact to be made, it is always polite to ask when such an expectation may not exist.
- When entering a room or area in which there is a person who is blind, it is polite to speak to the person to identify yourself and to let her know that you are there. Some people may feel that their privacy has been invaded when they later find that someone was present in the area unbeknownst to them (LaGrow & Long, 2011). Similarly, if you or any guide need to leave a traveler alone momentarily, it is considerate to tell the traveler when you are leaving and to leave the traveler standing next to a wall or similar physical object in the environment rather than in open space. Leaving the traveler in contact with an object can provide her with a point of reference for establishing her own orientation to the environment and will also avoid imposing upon her the uncomfortable feeling of standing alone in open space while waiting for someone's return.

- It goes without saying that consistency in performing guiding techniques is essential in order to build the traveler's trust in the instructor. It won't take more than a few bumps into a door frame or missed curbs to instill doubt in a new traveler's mind about the safety of traveling with the guide or, perhaps, about the traveler's own potential for safe travel alone later on.
- In several of the guiding techniques, the guide gives verbal cues regarding relevant environmental features (e.g., telling the traveler on which side of her the door opens). This is almost always done in new teaching situations. As the traveler gains confidence and skill in responding to non-verbal signals and to the movement of the guide's body, these verbal cues are faded. Fading the verbal cues as soon as possible minimizes the traveler's dependency on verbal cues and shifts the focus to responding to non-verbal signals. The benefits of using non-verbal signals whenever possible include:
  - Making it easier for the guide and traveler to carry on a conversation without interruption,
  - Facilitating travel through areas where conversation might be disturbing to other people (e.g., when walking through a theater or through any area where it is important to minimize unnecessary noise), and
  - Facilitating the traveler's skill at interpreting the movements of an unfamiliar or inexperienced guide.

The following module contains 12 guiding techniques, designed to enable safe and efficient travel in almost any environment. The techniques are divided into two sections, those for use when the traveler is not carrying a cane and those for use when she is. While separated into two sections for clarity of presentation, the reader will quickly notice that every technique in the first section has a counterpart in the second section.

# **WHEN THE TRAVELER IS NOT CARRYING A CANE**

# **BASIC GUIDING**

## **Purpose**

Use this technique to travel safely and efficiently in varying environments when the traveler is not carrying a cane. This technique is the most efficient method of walking with a guide and forms the foundation upon which all skills in the Guiding Techniques module are based. It is one that family, friends, and significant others should also learn.

## **Prerequisite Techniques**

None

## **Teaching Environments**

Begin in a quiet, open, familiar area that is free of obstacles and that does not require the traveler and guide to ascend or descend any steps. Initially presenting this technique in an area where the ground is level and smooth will also minimize the impact of any balance difficulties on learning this technique.

Progress to quiet, controlled, unfamiliar indoor and outdoor areas that have obstacles to walk around (e.g., chairs, benches, drinking fountains, poles, trash cans). Walking around obstacles gives the traveler practice following the guide's movements as he changes direction.

Progress to areas that have an uneven or irregular walking surface (e.g., rugs, carpet, ramps, curbs, grass). Lead up to areas that are more congested (e.g., busy hallways, cafeterias).

Practice this technique in a variety of environments (e.g., residential, small business, downtown) and situations (e.g., while the traveler and/or guide are carrying items, such as a cafeteria tray, grocery bag, book).

## **Skill**

Unlike most mobility techniques, the BASIC GUIDING technique is generally not taught or performed as a series of sequential steps. Rather, it is generally taught as a grouping of components that are performed simultaneously.

### **Initiating Contact**

#### **Guide-Initiated Contact**

This is the most commonly used method of initiating contact.

1. The guide and traveler stand facing the same direction, with their arms hanging comfortably at their sides. The guide touches the back of his hand to the back of the traveler's hand or to her forearm.
  - This facilitates contact in a non-verbal manner and eliminates any need for the traveler to search for the guide's arm.
  - Contacting the traveler with the back of one's hand is less intrusive and personal than contacting the traveler with an open palm.

**Note:** As a matter of courtesy, the guide verbally invites the traveler to take his arm by saying something like, "Would you like to take my arm?" prior to making physical contact.

2. The traveler slides the back of her hand up the guide's arm to a point immediately above the guide's elbow and grasps his arm. Unless there is a significant difference in height between the guide and traveler, this will position the traveler's elbow at approximately a 90-degree bend (see Figure 1.01).
  - Holding the guide's arm in this way will enable the traveler to interpret the guide's movements most reliably as they travel. (To help the traveler verify that she is holding the guide's arm just above the elbow, the guide can momentarily bend and straighten his elbow.)
  - Holding the guide's arm above the elbow allows the guide to have free movement of his lower arm and hand for doing such things as opening doors or carrying packages.
  - Unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., physical disability), the traveler should be able to walk on either side of the guide. Deciding on which side of the guide to walk generally depends upon factors such as safety, comfort, personal preference, and convenience for both the guide and the traveler.
    - Some guides may have a preferred side on which they wish the traveler to walk.
    - If the guide is carrying something with one arm, he may wish the traveler to grasp his other arm.
    - Dog guides are usually trained to walk on the left side of the handler. Travelers who use dog guides, therefore, generally prefer to walk with the guide with their right side.
    - Environmental and cultural situations occasionally dictate on which side of the guide a traveler should walk. For example, in some cultures, men walk on the street side of the sidewalk.



**Figure 1.01**

The traveler holds the guide's arm just above his elbow with a comfortably firm grasp. Her elbow is bent to approximately 90 degrees.

### **Traveler Initiated Contact**

This method is commonly used when the traveler either walks with an inexperienced guide or simply wishes to initiate contact with the guide.

1. The traveler may verbally request to take the guide's arm.
2. Localizing the guide's voice, the traveler locates the guide's arm by either
  - Reaching her straight arm out to the side until she contacts the guide's arm, or
  - Bending the elbow of her arm nearest the guide to 90 degrees and slowly rotating her arm outward toward the guide until the back of her hand touches the guide's arm.
    - Contacting another person with the back of one's hand is often seen as less intrusive than contacting him with one's palm.

If the traveler contacts the guide's trunk, she can lightly trail with the back of her hand to the guide's arm and then assume the proper grip above the guide's elbow.

These are natural and discreet movements that avoid the appearance of groping and minimize the chance of contacting the guide in an inappropriate manner.

3. The traveler then slides the back of her hand up the guide's arm to the proper position above the elbow.
  - The guide may bend and straighten his elbow to help the traveler find it.

### **Modifications**

Children or others who are much shorter than the guide may hold the guide's arm at a comfortable point somewhere between the guide's elbow and wrist (see Figure 1.02).



**Figure 1.02**

Very small children may find it most comfortable to hold the guide's wrist.

Very small children may even hold the guide's fingers (see Figure 1.03). When they do so, however, the guide may need to minimize his arm swing, because a pronounced arm swing can make it confusing or difficult for some small children to follow the guide's movements.



**Figure 1.03**

Toddlers may find it most comfortable to hold the guide's fingers.

Travelers who are significantly taller than the guide may find it more comfortable to hold higher on the guide's arm or, perhaps, even to hold the guide's shoulder if the difference in height makes a higher grasp on the guide's arm uncomfortable. Similarly, in certain cultures, it is customary for a male traveler to hold the shoulder of a guide. This position, however, can limit the traveler's ability to interpret signals from the guide in certain environmental situations, such as when negotiating narrow spaces.

## Grasp

1. Forming a horizontal "C" with her hand (as if holding a drinking glass), the traveler securely grasps the guide's arm just above the elbow. She positions her thumb on the outside of the guide's arm and her fingers on the inside of the guide's arm; her fingers and thumb point forward (see Figure 1.01, above).
  - Forming a C enables the traveler to feel the direction of the guide's movement most reliably. It also provides a brace for stops, making it difficult for the traveler to incorrectly continue forward when the guide stops walking.
  - The traveler's grasp should be firm but not so tight as to cause discomfort for the guide. It should be just secure enough so that a sudden movement of the guide's arm will not cause her to lose her grasp.
    - An excessively tight grasp may indicate that the traveler is tense.
    - A secure yet not tight grasp will be comfortable and will not tire either the traveler or the guide.

## Modifications

If the traveler has difficulty maintaining the proper grasp, the guide can gently press his upper arm and elbow against his side. Doing so keeps the traveler's fingers pressed lightly against his rib cage and provides increased control and security.

If the traveler cannot grasp the guide's arm (e.g., due to bulky or slippery clothing) she can maintain a slight forward pressure on the back of the guide's arm. Another alternative is to lightly grasp the guide's sleeve, although this is discouraged unless absolutely necessary, because it can decrease the traveler's ability to feel the guide's movement reliably.

If the traveler requires physical support from the guide during travel, the guide can hold his arm with his elbow bent to 90 degrees and his forearm parallel to the ground. The traveler loops her hand over the guide's forearm (see Figure 1.04) and can even interlock her fingers with the guide's fingers if she needs additional support. This position brings the traveler alongside the guide rather than having her walk in the typical position of a half-step distance behind the guide (see the "Walking" section, later in this module). Because the walking speed is typically slowed when using this modification, the traveler will still have sufficient reaction time to respond to signals from the guide (LaGrow & Blasch, 1992).



**Figure 1.04**

If the traveler requires physical support from the guide during travel, the guide can hold his or her forearm parallel to the ground. The traveler can then loop her arm over the guide's forearm for physical support, as needed.

## Arm Position

1. The guide's arm should be relaxed, hanging naturally to his side. When walking, the guide holds his guiding arm relatively steady with only a minimal arm swing except for intentional signaling.
  - Keeping his arm close to his side facilitates the guide's ability to keep the traveler aligned correctly behind him and to maintain the proper overall body width of the guide and traveler.
2. The traveler keeps her upper arm hanging naturally at her side and her forearm directed forward as she holds the guide's arm. She aligns the shoulder of her grasp arm directly behind the shoulder of the guide's guiding arm (see Figure 1.05). This position decreases the combined body widths of the guide and traveler while not restricting the movement of the guide. Most importantly, it enables the traveler to interpret kinesthetic signals that tell her about the guide's movement in the environment most accurately.
  - By keeping her elbow close to her side, the traveler avoids swinging wide on turns or moving laterally beyond the protection or control of the guide, potentially contacting obstacles outside of the travel path.
  - This position also helps her to maintain a proper half-step following distance behind the guide, which allows her time to react effectively to signals from the guide (see "Walking," below).



**Figure 1.05**

The traveler aligns the shoulder of her grasp arm directly behind the shoulder of the guide's guiding arm.

## Walking

1. The traveler walks a half-step distance behind the guide. This positions the traveler for maximum safety by allowing her greater reaction time when starting, stopping, or turning. Following too closely can decrease her reaction time and pose a safety hazard in the case of a sudden stop.

The guide walks at a normal pace (unless the traveler or guide has an impairment that limits the speed of walking). In this way, a slowed pace becomes a definite cue to indicate an upcoming environmental change, such as a descending stairway, and makes it generally easier for the traveler to interpret non-verbal signals from the guide. A normal pace is also more comfortable for travelers and guides.

- If the traveler tends to lag behind the guide, this may be an indication of insecurity, fear, or difficulty with balance; on the other hand, it may simply mean that the guide is walking at a pace that is too fast for the traveler's physical ability.
- In rare circumstances, it might be helpful to initially walk at a slower speed than normal for a new and fearful traveler, increasing to a normal speed as soon as possible. Walking at a slower than normal pace, however, tends to alter gait patterns and may lower a traveler's confidence in the ability of the guide; hence, it is not recommended unless absolutely necessary.
- The traveler's free arm should be swinging in a natural, relaxed manner. If the traveler holds it stiffly, it may be an indication of insecurity or fear. Some travelers who are congenitally blind, however, may typically not demonstrate a relaxed arm swing and may naturally hold their arms down at their sides.

2. It is the guide's responsibility to watch for and to appropriately navigate around objects and hazards both at foot level and at head height (e.g., low tree branches). In addition, he must always be aware of the combined widths of the traveler and himself and make any necessary adjustments in his guiding to ensure safe passage for both of them through any environment. The guide should periodically verify that the traveler is aligned correctly behind him by turning his head (with no or minimal rotation of his trunk) to glance back at her (see Figure 1.06). In turn, the traveler can verify that she is aligned correctly behind the guide by using her free hand to feel the guide's shoulder and then to feel her own (e.g., guide's right shoulder and traveler's left shoulder) (see Figures 1.07a and 1.07b).



**Figure 1.06**

The guide can verify that the traveler is aligned correctly behind him by turning his head to glance back at her.



**Figures 1.07a and 1.07b**

Two photos show how the traveler can verify that she is aligned correctly behind the guide by feeling (a) his shoulder and then (b) her own shoulder.

## **Breaking Contact**

1. The guide rotates his arm along its axis, signaling the traveler to release her grasp. This provides a non-verbal, discrete manner of signaling the traveler to release her grasp. If desired, the guide can just give a verbal cue or give a verbal cue in addition to the physical cue.
  - If the guide is going to leave the traveler alone, he should tell her that he is leaving and let her know when he returns. It is also a courtesy to let the traveler stand out of the flow of traffic and, if possible, to be in contact with an object (e.g., a wall or seat) in the environment. Doing so generally makes the traveler feel more comfortable and provides her with either physical support and/or a landmark for orientation purposes. Additionally, the traveler may look less conspicuous than if she stands alone in open space.
2. Upon feeling the guide rotate his guiding arm or upon hearing the guide's verbal cue, the traveler releases her grasp on the guide's arm.

## **General Modifications**

### **Negotiating Changes in Elevation Other Than Stairs or Curbs**

The guide approaches the elevation change (e.g., ramp, uneven terrain) perpendicularly. This ensures that the traveler will arrive at the change in elevation a half-step distance behind him, allowing her sufficient time to react to the guide's signal indicating the elevation change.

- The guide may pause slightly before negotiating any change in elevation so that the traveler has time to prepare for the change.
- The guide may elevate or depress the shoulder of his guiding arm slightly to indicate the direction of the elevation change. After the traveler and guide negotiate the change in elevation, the guide returns his shoulder to its natural position.

## **Taking Buses or Subways with a Guide**

With all similar forms of public transportation (bus, subway, trolley, streetcar), the guide leads when boarding, locating seats, and exiting. The traveler may have to lower or raise her grasp on the guide's arm in order to maintain contact while negotiating steep ascending or descending steps on buses or trolleys.

The guide and traveler should each hold onto hand railings, stanchions, or vehicle walls for support and balance while standing in a moving vehicle.

## **Walking With an Uninformed or Inexperienced Guide**

If the traveler anticipates walking with the guide through unfamiliar or complicated environments, she may wish to suggest that he specifically give a verbal warning of steps, doors, narrow areas, congestion, or any other changes in the environment that may affect how the traveler and guide perform the BASIC GUIDING technique.

If the traveler does not feel completely confident in the guide, she may

- Inform the guide of the proper procedures for guiding, including an appropriate pace,
- Drop behind the guide, as in the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES technique, and use the guide's body as a shield,
- Employ the UPPER HAND & FOREARM technique with her free hand,
- Use the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique for additional protection,
- Politely refuse the assistance of the guide.

## **Common Errors and Corrections**

### **Error:**

The traveler fails to keep her grasp arm shoulder aligned behind the guide's grasped arm shoulder.

### **Correction:**

Keeping her grasp arm shoulder aligned behind the guide's grasped arm shoulder enables the traveler to follow the guide and to respond to changes in his movement most effectively. This position also prevents her from overstepping the guide's position when he stops.

**Error:**

The guide walks at an inconsistent pace.

**Correction:**

Walking at a natural, consistent pace makes it easier for the traveler to follow the guide's movement.

**Error:**

The traveler loosely wraps her entire hand around the guide's arm with her palm and fingers resting against the front of the guide's upper arm.

**Correction:**

Holding the back of the guide's arm with her thumb and fingers pointing forward in a C-shaped grasp enables the traveler to perceive and follow the guide's movements most effectively.

**Error:**

The guide rotates his trunk when he glances back at the traveler.

**Correction:**

Keeping his trunk facing forward when he looks back at the traveler prevents the guide from inadvertently moving the traveler out of alignment.

**Error:**

The traveler reaches with her palm or with her fingers extended to contact the guide.

**Correction:**

Rotating her bent arm outward or reaching her straight arm out to the side in order to contact the guide with the back of her hand reduces the possibility that the traveler will poke the guide inappropriately. Contacting another person with the back of one's hand is often seen as less intrusive than contacting him with one's palm.

**Error:**

The traveler walks directly beside the guide.

**Correction:**

Walking a half-step behind the guide gives the traveler sufficient reaction time to respond to signals from the guide. This position also decreases the combined body widths of the guide and traveler while not restricting the movement of the guide.

**Error:**

Traveler grasps the guide's arm too tightly.

**Correction:**

Grasping the guide's arm firmly, but not too tightly, enables the traveler to follow the guide's movements easily without causing discomfort for the guide.

**Error:**

Traveler grasps the guide's arm too loosely.

**Correction:**

Grasping the guide's arm firmly, yet gently, will ensure that the traveler does not lose contact with the guide.

**Error:**

The traveler does not walk with her trunk facing directly forward.

**Correction:**

Walking with her trunk facing directly forward enables the traveler to most accurately interpret signals from the guide and sometimes improves balance.

**Error:**

The traveler grasps the guide's arm below the elbow.

**Correction:**

Unless she is unable to reach the guide's elbow, grasping his arm directly above the elbow assists the traveler to most reliably interpret the guide's movements. It also leaves the guide's lower arm and hand free to carry something, if necessary.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to keep her elbow at her side.

**Correction:**

Keeping her elbow at her side enables the traveler to most reliably interpret signals from the guide.

## Notes for Teachers

An important element in performing the BASIC GUIDING technique is an even pace. An even pace will help eliminate unnecessary hesitation and anxiety in some travelers associated with anticipating a change in the environment that never occurs. Consistency in giving signals helps a new traveler develop confidence and trust in the guide and helps her to learn to respond to signals from him most quickly.

Initially, the guide may assist the traveler to interpret and react to signals by giving her a verbal cue immediately prior to or concurrent with the corresponding non-verbal signal. It may also be helpful for the guide to initially describe environmental changes to the traveler before arriving at them so that the traveler can anticipate them and react appropriately. This is especially helpful when walking with a traveler who is inexperienced or insecure. This advance cueing is faded as the traveler gains confidence and improves her ability to identify and to respond to signals from the guide. Fading the verbal cues as soon as possible minimizes the traveler's dependency

on these cues and shifts the traveler's focus to non-verbal signals. The use of non-verbal signals, whenever possible, also

- Makes it easier for the guide and traveler to carry on a conversation without interruption,
- Facilitates travel through areas where conversation might be disturbing to other people (e.g., when walking through a theater or through any area where it is important to maintain silence),
- Facilitates the traveler's skill at interpreting the movements of an unfamiliar or inexperienced guide.

## Related Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Handling Unsolicited Assistance (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Seating<sup>1</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

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<sup>1</sup> The BASIC GUIDING technique is prerequisite to Theater and Auditorium Seating and Seating with a Guide.

# NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES

## Purpose

This technique is used for traveling through areas that are too narrow or congested for the guide and traveler to pass through easily or safely using the BASIC GUIDING technique. Such areas might include bus aisles, store and theatre aisles, and restaurant aisles.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, open space in which there is room to practice this technique without contacting any obstacles.

Progress to a quiet, familiar area that has narrow spaces (e.g., narrow hallways, open doorways) through which to pass. Choose an area in which the ground is level and smooth and does not require the traveler and guide to ascend or descend any steps or to negotiate closed doors.

Progress next to areas that have an uneven or irregular walking surface (e.g., rugs, carpet, ramps, curbs, grass). Lead up to areas that are more congested (e.g., busy hallways).

Practice this technique in a variety of environments (e.g., narrow aisles, cafeterias, congested hallways or sidewalks, stores, theaters, restaurants, narrow stairways). Be sure to also practice this technique on stairs after the traveler has learned the NEGOTIATING STAIRS (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique.

## Skill

1. The guide signals the traveler that they are approaching a narrow space by reaching his guiding arm behind him as far as possible with his elbow straight and his hand centered at midline (see Figure 2.01).
  - When the traveler is first learning this technique, it may be helpful for the guide to give a verbal cue that they are approaching a narrow space. Gradually, this verbal cue would be faded as the traveler learns to respond reliably to the guide's signal.
  - If the guide has difficulty extending his arm fully behind him as described above, he can reach his arm backward, bending his elbow and resting his forearm in the small of his back (see Figure 2.02).



**Figure 2.01**

The guide reaches his guiding arm behind him with his hand centered at midline to signal to the traveler that they are approaching a narrow space.



**Figure 2.02**

If the guide has difficulty extending his arm fully behind him, he can bend his elbow and rest his forearm in the small of his back.

2. The traveler moves directly behind the guide, reaching her grasp arm across her body (shown above in Figure 2.01). The traveler stretches her arm out to place herself far enough behind the guide to avoid stepping on his heels.
  - Travelers who have short arms and/or a long step length or who cannot straighten their arms fully to avoid stepping on the guide's heels can slide their grasp hand down to the guide's wrist in order to increase their distance behind the guide (see Figure 2.03).
  - If the traveler is unable to bring her grasp arm across her body, she can change her grasp to hold the guide's arm with the "same-side" hand (i.e., she holds the

guide's right arm with her right hand or holds his left arm with her left hand), then straighten her arm fully (see Figure 2.04).



**Figure 2.03**

If needed to prevent stepping on the guide's heels, the traveler can slide her grasp down to the guide's wrist.



**Figure 2.04**

The traveler grasps the guide's arm with the "same-side" hand.

3. The traveler can verify that she is directly behind the guide by using her free hand to feel the relative locations of her shoulder and the guide's shoulder (e.g., the traveler's left shoulder is behind the guide's right shoulder) (see Figure 2.05).



**Figure 2.05**

The traveler verifies that she is directly behind the guide by using her free hand to feel the relative locations of her shoulder and the guide's shoulder.

4. As they pass through the narrow area, the guide should glance back at the traveler, (with no or minimal rotation of his trunk) as needed, to verify that she is positioned directly behind him and will pass through the area without bumping into objects or people. In order to avoid inadvertently moving the traveler out of position to pass through the narrow space safely, the guide must be careful to minimize any rotation of his trunk as he glances behind him (see Figure 2.06).



**Figure 2.06**

As they pass through the narrow area, the guide glances back at the traveler to verify that she is positioned directly behind him and will pass through the area without bumping into objects or people.

5. The guide returns his arm to his side, signaling that they have passed through the narrow space. He and the traveler then resume the BASIC GUIDING technique.
  - For travelers who have difficulty proprioceptively identifying that the guide has returned his arm to his side, the guide can either give a verbal cue or can gently press the fingers of the traveler's grasp hand momentarily against his side to provide an additional tactile cue.

## General Modifications

In extremely narrow or congested areas (e.g., between rows of seats in an auditorium or in cafeteria lines), the guide and traveler can sidestep.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The guide fails to look back at the traveler as they pass through the narrow space.

### Correction:

Looking back at the traveler as they pass through the narrow space enables him to verify that the traveler is positioned correctly and is passing through the space safely.

### Error:

The traveler fails to straighten her grasp arm fully when walking directly behind the guide.

### Correction:

Straightening her grasp arm fully positions her far enough behind the guide to avoid stepping on his heels.

### Error:

When the guide brings his arm behind his back to signal a narrow space, he fails to place his hand in the midline of his body.

### Correction:

Bringing his arm sufficiently behind his back to place his hand in midline brings the traveler directly behind him. If the guide is unable to reach his arm behind him far enough to bring his hand to midline, he can use a modified technique (e.g., the traveler can hold the guide's arm with her same-side hand, making it possible to assume a position directly behind the guide as they walk through the narrow space).

### Error:

The traveler fails to reach her arm fully across her body when walking behind the guide.

### Correction:

Reaching her arm fully across her body when walking behind the guide best positions the traveler to walk directly behind the guide.

## **Error:**

The guide fails to maintain his trunk facing forward when he glances back at the traveler.

## **Correction:**

Maintaining his trunk facing forward when he glances back at the traveler prevents the guide from inadvertently moving the traveler out of the proper position to pass through the narrow space safely.

## **Notes for Teachers**

Slowing down slightly while going through a narrow space helps make the performance of this technique smoothest and most comfortable for both the guide and the traveler.

To assist travelers who are very new to this technique or who have difficulty initially interpreting proprioceptive cues, the guide can initially exaggerate his arm movement and/or tell the traveler that they are approaching a narrow area. To indicate that they have completely passed through the narrow space, he can gently press the traveler's fingers against his side to signal that the traveler should return to the BASIC GUIDING position. The guide then fades these additional assists as the traveler gains skill in performing the technique.

For travelers who have difficulty understanding the proper position of their body directly behind the guide's body when walking through a narrow space (e.g., young children or those with disabilities that affect learning), it may be helpful to describe this position in terms of walking in the guide's footsteps. This analogy often helps to convey the concept of proper positioning to most new travelers.

Watch for signs of insecurity in the traveler (e.g., ducking her head, slowing her pace, rounding her shoulders, tightening her grasp on the guide's arm). Also, know that excessive time spent in narrow spaces position may cause anxiety or discomfort for some travelers, especially those who are insecure.

## **Related Techniques**

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique will be helpful if it is ever necessary to negotiate stairs or escalators that are only wide enough for one person.

# REVERSING DIRECTION

## Purpose

This technique is used to reverse direction when the traveler is not carrying a cane. It encompasses several methods for reversing direction in a variety of areas, both large and small. Selected methods are most commonly used in elevators, theaters, narrow store or restaurant aisles, or any place where space to turn around is limited. This technique also forms the foundation for the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)  
Trailing<sup>1</sup>

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar area that has plenty of room in which to turn around.

Progress next to areas that have limited room in which to turn around (e.g., the end of a narrow hallway).

Practice this technique in a variety of environments that require the use of this skill (e.g., crowded rooms, cafeterias, restaurants, theaters, elevators, narrow hallways).

**Note:** Do not perform this technique on stairs, because it can cause the guide or the traveler to lose balance.

## Skills

### Pivot

This is the easiest method by which to reverse direction, but it requires more room than do the other methods; it is, therefore, only used in relatively spacious areas.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop if they are still walking.
3. Without breaking contact, the guide and traveler make a 180-degree turn; either the guide or traveler can serve as the pivot point.
  - Some travelers prefer to serve as the pivot point, as they find it disorienting to swing around the guide who is acting as the pivot point.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the TRAILING technique may assist in learning how to locate the guide's other arm by trailing across his back when reversing direction using either the Hand-Over-Hand or Scoop method.

## **Breaking Contact**

This is an easy method for reversing direction that looks very natural.

1. Either the traveler or the guide indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop if they are still walking.
3. The guide rotates his arm to break contact with the traveler, or the traveler can break contact with the guide.
4. The traveler and guide turn 180 degrees, turning toward one another.
  - Turning toward each other looks more natural than turning away from one another.
5. The guide and traveler resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Maintaining Contact**

This method is useful for travelers who require physical support from the guide or who become fearful or disoriented when separated from the guide.

1. Either the guide or the traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop if they are still walking.
3. The guide and traveler turn 90 degrees toward each other. As they do so, the traveler reaches her free arm out slightly wider than body width, then brings it in slowly to locate and grasp the guide's opposite arm.
  - The guide can also reach out with his free hand to touch the traveler's free hand. She then trails up his forearm to grasp above his elbow.
4. The traveler releases her original grasp on the guide's arm.
5. The guide and traveler turn another 90 degrees to complete the turn, then resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Hand-Over-Hand**

This method is useful for travelers who require physical support from the guide or who become fearful or disoriented when separated from the guide.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop if they are still walking.
3. As they begin to make a 90-degree turn in the same direction, the traveler grasps the guide's guiding arm with her free hand, then releases her original grasp. As they continue to turn, the traveler reaches out slightly wider than body width with her free hand, and then brings her hand in to locate and grasp the guide's opposite arm; or if she prefers, she can trail the guide's back with her free hand to locate his other arm (see Figure 3.01).

- The guide may reach the elbow of his free arm backward to make it easier for the traveler to find it.
- The traveler may choose to trail the guide's back with her free hand to most easily locate the guide's free arm. If she does so, she should cup her trailing hand slightly to avoid snagging the guide's clothing or hair.
  - The traveler should straighten her grasp arm fully while trailing to avoid stepping on the guide's heels.



**Figure 3.01**

As they turn, the traveler trails the guide's back with her free hand to locate his other arm.

4. The traveler releases her grasp on the guide's original guiding arm and moves that hand to grasp his opposite arm above her other hand.
5. The traveler releases her original grasp on that arm. She and the guide each turn another 90 degrees and resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler and guide perform this technique while on the staircase.

### Correction:

Reversing direction on a staircase should not be attempted, because it can cause the traveler and/or the guide to lose balance.

**Error:**

When performing the Breaking Contact method, the traveler contacts the guide with extended fingertips.

**Correction:**

Contacting the guide with the back of her hand prevents her from accidentally poking the guide.

**Error:**

When performing the Hand-Over-Hand method, the traveler fails to release her original grasp on the guide's arm and simply reaches for the guide's opposite arm with her free hand while turning.

**Correction:**

The traveler should first grasp the guide's arm with her other hand, then release her original grasp and trail the guide's back (or simply reach out for his arm) with her now free hand in order to avoid twisting her arms.

## Notes for Teachers

As with many of the guiding techniques, travelers and guides who frequently travel together can use a pre-planned non-verbal cue to initiate this procedure.

## Related Techniques

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Seating<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around to practice negotiating a door, especially when space on either side of the door is limited.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around on a landing to practice walking up and down the same staircase, especially when space on the landing is limited.

<sup>3</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique can be helpful, especially in theater seating when the guide and traveler may need to turn around to return via the same aisle by which they approached their row of seats.

# TRANSFERRING SIDES

## Purpose

Use this technique to have the traveler reposition herself to stand or walk on the other side of a guide when she is not carrying a cane. Common situations in which this technique is used include transferring to the guide's other side in order to reach the handrail on stairs and positioning herself to follow the guide into a narrow row of seats in a theater or auditorium.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Trailing<sup>1</sup>

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar area that has plenty of room in which to practice transferring sides.

Practice this technique in a variety of environments that require the use of this skill (e.g., when the traveler needs to transfer sides for ease in negotiating a doorway or stairway).

## Skills

### Hand-Over-Hand

This skill is, perhaps, a bit more cumbersome than the Scoop skill (described next); however, some travelers find it more secure because they always have a firm grasp on one of the guide's arms. For this reason, elderly travelers, those who have physical disabilities, or those with balance problems may prefer this skill, because it affords the most stability.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to transfer sides.
2. With her free hand, the traveler grasps the guide's guiding arm above her original grasp hand. She then releases her original grasp.
3. Extending her new grasp arm fully, the traveler steps behind the guide.
  - Extending her arm fully ensures that she does not step on the guide's heels as she transfers sides.
  - For smoother movement while walking, the traveler can extend her grasp arm by simply slowing her pace momentarily.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the TRAILING technique may assist travelers in learning how to locate the guide's other arm by trailing across his back when transferring sides.

4. As the traveler transfers sides, she reaches out with her free hand slightly wider than body width and then brings her arm in to locate and grasp the guide's opposite arm; or if she prefers, she may trail the guide's back with her free hand to locate his other arm (see Figure 4.01).

- Trailing gives more stability and security for travelers who are insecure and those who have balance or other difficulties.
- The traveler's trailing hand should be cupped slightly to avoid snagging the guide's clothing or hair.
- The guide may extend his elbow backward to make it easier for the traveler to locate his free arm.



**Figure 4.01**

The traveler trails the guide's back with her free hand to locate his other arm.

5. The traveler then releases her grasp on the guide's original guiding arm.
6. Grasping his opposite arm with her now free hand, she releases her original grasp on that arm and resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

**Note:** This skill can be performed either while standing or while walking.

## **Scoop**

This is a relatively easy method of transferring sides. It can be performed while standing still or while walking. Some travelers, however, find it difficult to maintain contact with the guide when performing this skill while walking.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to transfer sides.
2. The traveler places the back of her free hand on the back of the guide's guiding arm, above her grasp hand; her fingers are pointed toward the guide's opposite arm, held together and slightly curled (see Figure 4.02).

- This position of the fingers facilitates trailing across the guide's back and positions the traveler's hand to grasp the guide's opposite arm. Curling the fingers slightly ensures that the traveler's hand will not accidentally pull the guide's hair or clothing.



**Figure 4.02**

The traveler places the back of her free hand on the back of the guide's guiding arm, above her grasp hand; her fingers are pointed toward the guide's opposite arm, held together and slightly curled.

3. The traveler releases her grasp on the guide's arm. Turning 90 degrees or extending her arm fully (to avoid stepping on the guide's heels), she then trails the guide's back with the back of her other hand to locate the guide's opposite arm (see Figure 4.03).
  - The guide may reach the elbow of his free arm backward to make it easier for the traveler to locate his other arm.
  - In order to maintain contact with the guide, the traveler must be certain not to release her grasp on the guide's arm before she has her other hand positioned to trail. Travelers with good kinesthetic awareness, however, may omit trailing.
  - This skill is more difficult to do when walking than when standing still. If done while walking, it may help the traveler avoid losing contact with the guide if she moves quickly and even applies slight pressure against the guide's back as she trails. It may also help the traveler to perform the transfer more smoothly if the guide slows his pace slightly.



**Figure 4.03**

The traveler trails the guide's back to locate his opposite arm.

4. The traveler grasps the guide's opposite arm just above the elbow.
5. The traveler and guide resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

## General Modifications

If there is insufficient room for the traveler to transfer sides, the guide can simultaneously sidestep slightly in the direction opposite to the traveler's movement. The combined body width needed to perform this skill is then only two body widths instead of three body widths.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to extend her trailing arm fully before trailing the guide's back.

### Correction:

Extending her trailing arm fully before trailing the guide's back positions her far enough behind the guide to prevent stepping on his heels.

### Error:

When performing the Scoop method, the traveler fails to release her grasp on the guide's arm when starting to trail his back.

### Correction:

Releasing her original grasp on the guide's arm when starting to trail his back prevents the traveler from crossing her arms uncomfortably and enables her to maintain a sufficient distance behind the guide to avoid stepping on his heels.

**Error:**

The guide and traveler perform this technique on stairs.

**Correction:**

This technique should be done only on level ground to avoid accidental loss of balance.

**Error:**

The guide fails to extend the elbow of his non-grasped arm backward.

**Correction:**

While not a serious error, the guide should, if possible, extend his elbow backward to make it easier for the traveler to find it as she transfers sides.

**Error:**

When performing the Hand-Over-Hand method, the traveler releases her original grasp on the guide's arm before she has grasped his other arm.

**Correction:**

Maintaining her original grasp on the guide's arm until she is able to grasp the guide's other arm prevents the traveler from losing contact with the guide.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to cup her trailing hand slightly while she trails the guide's back.

**Correction:**

Cupping her trailing hand slightly helps the traveler avoid snagging the guide's hair or clothing or poking him in an uncomfortable manner.

## Notes for Teachers

Transferring sides can be initiated by either the guide or the traveler for any number of reasons, such as

- Personal preference (e.g., if the guide's or traveler's arm gets tired),
- Social reasons (e.g., in some cultures, where the man always walks on the curb side of a sidewalk when walking with a woman),
- Comfort and ease in negotiating environmental situations (e.g., if the traveler needs to move next to the railing before ascending/descending stairs, if the traveler needs to reposition herself to either lead or follow the guide into a row of auditorium seats).

Because this technique is easier to perform while standing than while walking, it is helpful to first practice the technique while stationary. After the traveler has learned to perform it correctly while the guide stands still, she can often learn to do it more easily while she and the guide are walking.

While walking, it is often easier to perform this technique if the guide and traveler momentarily slow their pace.

This technique can also be used as a modification when negotiating doors with a guide if the traveler is unable to reach and catch the door successfully when performing the partial transfer technique.

Some people may find that trailing the guide's back results in an excessive amount of physical contact (LaGrow & Long, 2011). Unless transferring sides while walking, those travelers who have good proprioceptive awareness will generally later drop trailing in favor of simply reaching for the guide's other arm. Travelers who need or prefer the additional contact are free to continue to use the trailing method if they so choose.

It is never advised to transfer sides during a turn or when walking up or down stairs. Doing so makes the technique more difficult to perform; when done on stairs, it can also cause the guide or the traveler to lose his or her footing.

## Related Techniques

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Seating<sup>3</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

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<sup>1</sup> The traveler can use the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique to move to the other side of the guide in order to be next to the handrail of the stairway or escalator.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the traveler to learn how to position herself behind the guide in order to negotiate a door when she is on the latch side of the door.

<sup>3</sup> The traveler can use the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique to move to the proper side of the guide in order to enter a row of theater seats.

# NEGOTIATING DOORS

## Purpose

This technique is used to negotiate closed doors when the traveler is not carrying a cane. This technique provides an efficient means of handling a variety of doors: self-closing and manual-closing, doors that open in or out, and doors that open to the left or to the right. This technique also forms the foundation for the NEGOTIATING DOORS (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Upper Hand & Forearm

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a familiar area that is quiet and free from a lot of pedestrian traffic. For initial instruction, use indoor, lightweight, self-closing doors where wind and other weather factors will not interfere with teaching and where there are no steps to walk up or down immediately before or after going through the doorway.

- Lightweight self-closing doors are especially important when working with very young or elderly travelers who may lack the strength to handle a heavy door.

Gradually progress to areas that have heavier self-closing doors, including those that lead to the outside.

Give the traveler experience negotiating doors of many different sizes. Introduce her to both manual- and self-closing doors, sliding doors, doors that open to the right and to the left, doors that present a variety of doorknobs and handles, and doors that are placed closely in sequence (e.g., at entrances to some stores or hotels, especially in colder climates). Also introduce the traveler to doorways that have a step going either up or down immediately before or after the doorway.

Lastly, practice the technique in areas where there is heavier pedestrian traffic.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around to practice negotiating a door, especially when space on either side of the door is limited.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the traveler to learn how to position herself behind the guide in order to negotiate a door when she is on the latch side of the door.

The following are some tips for making the initial teaching process easier:

- Use a set of double doors. This enables one to teach push/pull doors without requiring the traveler to transfer sides after passing through the doorway.
- Use doors that have windows in order to see pedestrians approaching from the other side.

## Skills

### Self-Closing Doors

To negotiate a self-closing door when walking with a guide

1. The guide and traveler approach the door perpendicularly.
  - The guide may verbally indicate the direction in which the doors opens (i.e., to the left or right).
2. The guide places the traveler in the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position and opens the door.
  - **If the traveler is on the hinge side,** she straightens her grasp arm fully and places her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position, ready to assume the weight of the door when the guide passes it to her (see Figure 5.01).
  - **If the traveler is on the latch side,** she assumes a partial-transfer position behind the guide in which she
    - Grasps the guide's guiding arm with her free hand, then releases her original grasp, and
    - Straightens her new grasp arm fully, steps behind the guide, and places her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position, ready to assume the weight of the door when the guide passes it to her (see Figure 5.02).

**Regardless of the side on which the traveler is walking (hinge vs. latch), note the following:**

- By straightening her grasp arm fully, the traveler can walk far enough behind the guide to avoid stepping on his heels as they go through the doorway. It also places her in the proper position to catch the door.
- Placing her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position enables the traveler to contact the door with her palm, rather than with the sensitive bones on the back of her hand.
  - Some travelers will prefer to use a modified UPPER HAND & FOREARM position, in which the hand is held just above waist level. Other travelers will want to hold their hand at or slightly higher than shoulder height in order to have better leverage when they take the weight of the door from the guide (see step 4).
- If the traveler mistakenly identifies her position as being on the latch side instead of the hinge side (or vice versa), she will identify the error when she does not

contact the door in approximately one step for a “pull” door and one or two steps for a “push” door.

- If the traveler wishes to verify that her arm is in the proper UPPER HAND & FOREARM position, she can touch the guide’s shoulder lightly with the back of her free hand and then straighten her elbow to place her hand a few inches outside of the guide’s body width. This helps to ensure that her hand is in the proper position to contact the door.



**Figure 5.01**

The traveler places her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position, ready to assume the weight of the door when the guide passes it to her.



**Figure 5.02**

The traveler assumes a partial-transfer position behind the guide and places her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position, ready to assume the weight of the door when the guide passes it to her.

3. The guide moves forward until the traveler's hand is positioned near the edge of the door and then pauses. The guide may need to either allow the door to close slightly or open it slightly wider in order to place the stile\* into the palm of the traveler's free hand (see Figure 5.03). For optimum leverage (and to ensure that her hand is not near the hinge where it can be injured), the traveler should contact the face of the door on the latch-side stile.
  - As the guide moves forward, he looks over his shoulder (minimizing any rotation of his trunk) to verify that the traveler has her arm positioned correctly to contact and then assume the weight of the door and that she is positioned to pass through the doorway without contacting the door jamb.
  - If negotiating a push door (one that opens away from the guide and traveler), the traveler may straighten her arm to reach out and contact the door. It is important that the traveler not reach for the door until the guide has moved forward and paused.\*

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\* A stile is technically found only on doors with paneled construction. For the purposes of this curriculum, however, a hand-span-wide vertical strip along the face of flat doors also will be considered a stile.



**Figure 5.03**

The guide pauses and places the door stile into the traveler's palm.

4. The traveler generally takes one or two steps after sensing the opening of the door, or she can use the door threshold as a marker to indicate her position relative to the opened door. If she reaches too soon, she may catch her fingers in the hinge.
  - If negotiating a pull door (one that opens toward the guide and traveler), it is important that the traveler keep her hand and forearm still and never reach out to contact the door. Reaching out would leave her trunk and face unprotected against accidental contact with the door edge. Doing so would also make it more difficult for the guide to position the door stile near the traveler's hand.
5. The guide passes the weight of the door to the traveler. If the guide has had to close the door slightly in order to place the outside stile of the door where the traveler's hand would contact it, the traveler may now need to open the door slightly wider in order to pass through the doorway. The traveler should keep her thumb and fingers flat on the face of the door and not wrap her hand around the door edge. This minimizes the possibility of injury to her hand from any rough door edges.
6. Once the traveler has assumed the weight of the door, the guide continues through the doorway. After passing through the doorway, the traveler releases the door, allowing it to close behind her.
7. The guide and traveler resume the BASIC GUIDING position.

## Manual-Closing Doors

The procedure for negotiating manual-closing doors varies only slightly from that used to negotiate self-closing doors. For the sake of clarity, however, the skill is presented here in its entirety.

Steps 1-4 are the same as those for negotiating self-closing doors.

5. The guide positions the stile of the door to contact the palm of the traveler's raised hand. The traveler slides her hand down along the stile to the doorknob while the guide continues to hold the door steady (see Figure 5.04). The guide then passes control of the door to the traveler. If the guide has had to close the door slightly in order to place the outside stile of the door where the traveler's hand would contact it, the traveler may now need to open the door slightly wider in order to pass through the doorway.

- While sliding her hand down the stile, the traveler should keep her thumb and fingers flat on the face of the door and not wrap her hand around the door edge. This minimizes the possibility of injury to her hand from any rough door edges.
- Some travelers may choose to trail gently down the guide's arm (with a familiar guide) to locate the doorknob more easily.



**Figure 5.04**

The traveler slides her hand down the stile to the doorknob (indicated here by a white arrow) while the guide holds the door steady.

6. Once the traveler has assumed control of the door, the guide continues through the doorway. After passing through the doorway, the traveler pushes or pulls the door closed behind her.
7. The guide and traveler resume the BASIC GUIDING position.

## General Modifications

Small children whose arms are not long enough to reach the door from a partial-transfer position might need to transfer sides in order to be on the hinge side before negotiating the doorway. Similarly, some adult travelers may choose to transfer sides as a simple matter of personal preference.

When walking with an inexperienced guide, the traveler can get directly behind the guide (without stepping on his feet) to avoid being hit by or to avoid being in the way of the closing door. The guide simply lets go of a self-closing door or closes a manual door when both have passed through it. This modification may also be appropriate for use by travelers who are physically unable to hold the weight of the door.

Some travelers curl their fingers into a fist when catching the door so as not to jam their fingers when contacting the door. Other travelers may choose to do so simply as a matter of personal preference.

In some cultures, the male (whether traveler or guide) opens the door and holds it open for the female as a courtesy. If so, the following modifications of the NEGOTIATING DOORS (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique may be employed:

- **Female guide with male traveler**
  - The guide centers herself in front of the door handle or knob. She may verbally indicate which way the door opens (i.e., left or right).
  - The traveler reaches his free hand toward the latch side of the door, after transferring sides if necessary, and contacts the door using the LOWER HAND & FOREARM technique. He then trails to the knob.
  - The traveler opens the door, allowing the guide to pass through first, and then follows through himself.
  - The guide and traveler continue travel.
- **Male guide with female traveler**

Depending upon the environment, this modification may assume that the traveler uses a cane.

  - The guide brings the traveler to the door and positions her centered in front of the door.
  - The guide and traveler break contact. The guide opens the door, holding it open until the traveler has passed before walking through the doorway himself. If the traveler needs to be physically guided through the door, the guide can do so by providing light pressure on her arm or back.

To negotiate doors with a guide when the traveler is carrying something in her free hand, employ the following:

- If the object is small or narrow (e.g., cane), she can either place it between the thumb of her grasp hand and the guide's arm, or she can hold the object in her free hand and contact the door with the side or back of her free hand in order to prevent the object from bumping against the door (see Figure 5.05).
- If the object is medium sized, the traveler can maintain contact with the guide's arm by pressing the back of her grasp hand against it. She can then hold the item in this grasp hand, leaving her other hand free to contact the door.

- If the object is too large for the traveler to hold in her grasp hand, it may be necessary for the guide and traveler to break contact and to allow the traveler to negotiate the door independently.



**Figure 5.05**

The traveler contacts the door with the back of her hand as she holds an object in that hand.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to place her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position when the guide signals her to assume the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

### Correction:

Placing her free arm in the UPPER HAND & FOREARM position places the traveler in the optimum position to contact the door and to then take its weight from the guide.

### Error:

The guide fails to look back at the traveler as they pass through the doorway.

### Correction:

Looking back at the traveler as they pass through the doorway enables him to verify that the traveler will clear the doorway without bumping into the doorframe.

**Error:**

The guide rotates his trunk when looking back at the traveler as they pass through the doorway.

**Correction:**

Keeping his trunk facing forward as he looks back prevents him from inadvertently moving the traveler out of position to pass through the doorway safely.

**Error:**

The guide fails to pause and gently place the door stile against the traveler's hand as he passes through the doorway.

**Correction:**

Pausing and gently placing the door stile against the traveler's hand enables her to take the weight of the door safely from the guide and ensures that the door will not swing back and hit the traveler unexpectedly.

**Error:**

The traveler reaches for a pull door.

**Correction:**

Maintaining a static UPPER HAND & FOREARM position and not reaching for a pull door prevents her hand from passing behind the door and exposing her face and body to injury.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to straighten her grasp arm fully when assuming the partial transfer position.

**Correction:**

Straightening her grasp arm fully places her a sufficient distance behind the guide to contact the door successfully. It also prevents her from stepping on the guide's heels.

**Error:**

The traveler reaches for a push door before the guide pauses and before she has arrived at the threshold.

**Correction:**

Waiting until the guide pauses and she has arrived at the threshold before reaching for the door ensures that the traveler's hand will not reach too close to the door hinge, where it may be exposed to injury.

### **Error:**

The traveler catches the door by wrapping her hand around the door edge rather than placing her hand flat against the stile of the door.

### **Correction:**

Assuming the weight of the door with a flat hand against the stile helps to avoid getting splinters or cuts from grabbing a rough or sharp door edge.

### **Error:**

The guide fails to place the traveler in the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position.

### **Correction:**

Unless the doorway is wide enough to easily accommodate the width of both the guide and traveler, the guide should place the traveler in the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position to prevent her from bumping into the door frame. The NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position also makes it easier for the traveler to contact the door from the partial-transfer position.

## **Notes for Teachers**

Negotiating doors with a guide is generally taught in the following sequence, in which increasing demands are placed on the traveler:

1. Push, traveler on the hinge side.
2. Pull, traveler on the hinge side.
3. Push, traveler on the latch side.
4. Pull, traveler on the latch side.

For a new or inexperienced traveler, the guide may verbally indicate what type of door is being traversed (push/pull, opening to the left/right, self-closing/manual). The verbal cues should be faded out as soon as possible. More experienced travelers can use the following auditory and kinesthetic cues to determine what type of door is being traversed:

- **Push, traveler on the hinge side:** The guide leans his trunk forward and rotates his trunk toward the door. The traveler should not lean forward with the guide.
- **Pull, traveler on the hinge side:** The guide appears to rock backward and rotate his trunk as he opens the door. The traveler should not rock backward with the guide.
- **Push, traveler on the non-hinge side:** The guide leans his trunk forward, but does not rotate his trunk. The traveler should not lean forward with the guide.
- **Pull, traveler on the non-hinge side:** The guide appears to rock backward as he opens the door, but does not rotate his trunk. The traveler should not rock backward with the guide.

To help the traveler transition from verbal to kinesthetic cues, the guide can initially exaggerate his body motion forward and backward to indicate a push or pull door.

Additional kinesthetic and auditory cues (e.g., a sound or wind passing through a doorway) can often help the traveler to determine which type of door she and the guide are negotiating and the direction in which the door will open. Self-closing vs. manual-closing doors can be identified by how much effort the guide is exerting to open it (the guide must lean his trunk forward or rock backward to a greater degree when handling the greater weight of a self-closing door). The traveler can also identify self-closing doors by the weight of the door against her hand when she contacts it. In turn, manual-closing doors can be identified by a lack of pressure from the door against the traveler's hand.

Fire codes require that exit doors in public buildings open out, operating as push doors from the inside, in order to aid in quick evacuation. Similarly, while there may be exceptions to the rule, doors to public meeting rooms generally open outward, whereas doors to private offices generally open into the room.

## Related Techniques

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

# NEGOTIATING STAIRS

## Purpose

Use this skill to ascend and descend stairs when the traveler is not carrying a cane. Specific skills within this technique enable the guide and traveler to negotiate stairs of varying heights, depths, and shapes. This technique is also used when negotiating steps on buses and even when going up or down simple curbs.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)<sup>3</sup>

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar, or semi-familiar area. The stairway should have the following attributes:

- It should be a single set of stairs with a landing that is large enough to allow the traveler to take a few steps before she needs to perform another skill (e.g., negotiating a door or reversing direction).
- The steps should be consistent in depth, height, and width and should be straight, not curved.
- There should be 8 to 15 steps per set. This number is enough to achieve a comfortable rhythm with the guide, yet not so many that most travelers will tire quickly. When possible, the number of steps should be too many for the traveler to count easily. It is important that the traveler not count stairs but, rather, learn to focus on signals from the guide indicating arrival at the landing.
- A handrail may be present or not, depending on the traveler's need. Some O&M professionals feel that allowing the traveler to use a handrail provides a sense of security and optimum balance when first learning this technique. Other professionals feel that unless the traveler has a specific need to use a railing, it is best to introduce this technique without using a handrail in order to avoid instilling a dependence on it. This decision is best made on a case-by-case basis. Initially, if a handrail is used, it should extend the entire length of the stairway

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique will be helpful if it is ever necessary to negotiate stairs that are only wide enough for one person.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around to practice walking up and down the same staircase, especially when space on the landing is limited.

<sup>3</sup> Knowing the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the traveler to move to the other side of the guide in order to be next to the handrail, if needed.

rather than start or end at the second or third step, in order to avoid confusing the traveler about the location of the first step and of the landing.

Progress next to negotiating a variety of stairs, including those with the following features:

- Variety in length
- Several flights
- Variety in the amount of traction (e.g., polished stone, carpeted, with or without rubber runners)
- Variety in depth, height, and/or width
- Curved

Gradually lead up to negotiating congested stairways.

Practice this technique on stairs, with and without handrails, in a variety of environments that may require the use of this skill (e.g., public buildings, schools, theaters, shopping centers, bus and train stations, boarding and exiting city buses).

## Skills

### Ascending Stairs

Below are several different ways in which the guide and traveler can position themselves and take the first step. Choosing which method to use is generally a matter of personal preference.

#### Ascending Stairs: Pause, Then Step Up

A common method of negotiating ascending stairs when traveling with a guide

1. The guide and traveler approach the stairs perpendicularly. This ensures that the guide reaches the stairs before the traveler does. This also makes it easier for some travelers to maintain their orientation.
2. The guide stops in front of the first step. He pulls his arm forward (referred to as giving an arm-pull) to bring the traveler alongside him and up to the edge of the step.
3. The guide climbs the stairs, and the traveler follows one step behind.
  - The traveler's posture should be erect, with her head up and her weight forward on the balls of her feet, for optimum balance when ascending stairs.
  - Following one step behind the guide ensures that the traveler will have sufficient reaction time to respond to signals from the guide that indicate their arrival at a landing.
4. To signal arrival at the landing, the guide may pause while the traveler climbs the last step. Or, in place of pausing, he can give the traveler a verbal or tactile signal to indicate that she has reached the landing. Tactile signals might include such things

as giving a slight arm-pull or gently pressing the traveler's hand against his side as the traveler places her first foot on the landing.

- For the smoothest and most efficient movement, the guide should watch the traveler's feet carefully and give an arm-pull or other tactile signal at the moment that the traveler places her first foot on the landing.

### **Ascending Stairs: Step Up and Pause**

This method provides the traveler with a proprioceptive cue that she and the guide are about to walk up one or more steps. It also eliminates the need for an arm-pull at the beginning of the stairs.

1. The guide and traveler approach the stairs perpendicularly.
2. The guide climbs the first step and pauses, automatically bringing the traveler directly up to the edge of the bottom step.
3. The traveler follows one step behind the guide as they climb the stairs.

### **Ascending Stairs: Pause and Arm-pull.**

This method saves time by not requiring the guide and traveler to stop at the bottom of the stairs. For safety reasons, however, this modification is generally used only by more experienced travelers who have good balance, who respond quickly to signals from the guide, and who are not fearful of stairs.

1. The guide and traveler approach the stairs perpendicularly.
2. The guide does not come to a complete stop on the first step, but, instead, he merely pauses. When the traveler's foot is directly in front of the first step, the guide gives a gentle arm-pull and begins to climb the stairs. The traveler takes a natural first step onto the stairs.

### **Ascending Stairs: No Pause**

A method of negotiating ascending stairs that is made more efficient by eliminating the need to stop at the beginning of the stairway. For safety reasons, however, this modification is generally used only by more experienced travelers who have good balance, who respond quickly to signals from the guide, and who are not fearful of stairs.

1. The guide and traveler approach the stairs perpendicularly.
2. The guide does not pause, but, instead, he tenses his arm and hikes his shoulder slightly as he begins to climb the first step (see Figure 6.01). This indicates to the traveler that her next step will be on the first stair.



**Figure 6.01**

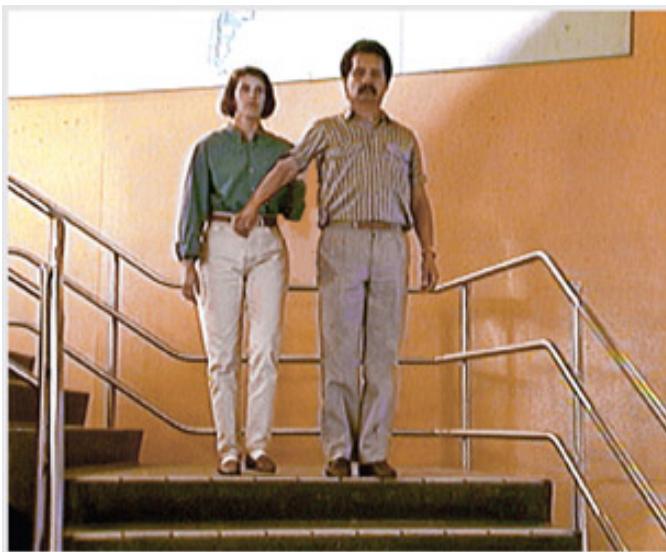
The guide does not pause, but tenses his arm and hikes his shoulder slightly (indicated here by a white arrow) to signal the traveler as he begins to climb the first step.

3. The traveler follows one step behind the guide as they climb the stairs.

## Descending Stairs

The standard method of negotiating descending stairs when traveling with a guide

1. The guide and traveler approach the stairs perpendicularly. This ensures that the guide reaches the stairs before the traveler does. This also makes it easier for some travelers to maintain their orientation.
2. The guide stops at the edge of the top step and pulls his arm forward (gives an arm-pull) to bring the traveler up to the edge of the step. It is important that the guide always watches the traveler's feet in order to ensure that the traveler does not overstep the top step. If the traveler does begin to move too far forward, the guide tenses his arm as needed to prevent the traveler from overstepping the edge of the step.
  - For very inexperienced travelers or for those who do not always respond reliably to the guide's signals, the guide can extend his guiding arm across the traveler's body as he tenses it to ensure that the traveler will not overstep the edge of the step (see Figure 6.02).



**Figure 6.02**

The guide can extend his guiding arm across the traveler's body, if necessary, to prevent her from overstepping the top step.

3. The traveler follows one step behind the guide as they walk down the stairs.
  - When walking down the stairs, the traveler's posture should be erect, with her head up and her weight slightly back on her heels for optimum balance.
  - Following one step behind the guide ensures that the traveler will have sufficient time to respond to signals from the guide that indicate their arrival at a landing.
  - Travelers who have poor balance or excessive fear may choose to slide their foot forward to locate the edge of each descending stair before stepping down. For added security they may also choose to slide the back of their heel down the riser of each stair as they step down. These modifications should be discouraged unless absolutely necessary, however, because they are inefficient, break the normal rhythm of walking down the stairs, and may unnecessarily instill uncertainty or fear in the traveler.
4. Upon reaching the landing, the guide may pause while the traveler walks down the last step. Or, in place of pausing, the guide can indicate to the traveler that they have arrived at the landing by giving a slight arm-pull or gently pressing the traveler's hand against his side as the traveler places her first foot on the landing.
  - For the smoothest and most efficient movement, the guide should watch the traveler's feet carefully and time the arm-pull or other tactile signal at the moment that the traveler places her first foot on the landing.

## Using the Handrail

For use by travelers who need to use the handrail for support or who simply wish to use it for any other reason

1. After walking up to the first step, the traveler locates the railing by reaching her free arm forward and to the side in an arc from thigh to mid-chest height with her arm fully extended (see Figure 6.03).
  - Railings are not present on all sets of stairs. Unless the traveler needs the railing for physical support or for another reason, it is important to encourage the traveler to have confidence in his or her ability to negotiate stairs without using the railing in order to avoid developing any unnecessary dependence on railings.
  - It is also important to keep in mind that railings are often irregular, sometimes stopping short of or extending beyond the stairs.



**Figure 6.03**

The traveler locates the railing by reaching her free arm forward and to the side, in an arc (indicated here by a white arrow) from thigh to mid-chest height.

## General Modifications

### On Stairs That Vary in Depth

The guide and traveler simply adjust their stride to variations in step depth; at deeper stairs, the guide and traveler will simply take longer strides or they can pause at each individual step.

### On Stairs That Are Shaped Irregularly

On most circular staircases, the stair depth at the middle third of each step most closely resembles the depth of stairs on a standard staircase. The traveler should, therefore, be positioned in the center of the stairway where the steps are most consistent in depth. The guide should walk on the outside curve where the steps are deep enough to provide secure footing.

## On Stairs That Are Narrow in Width

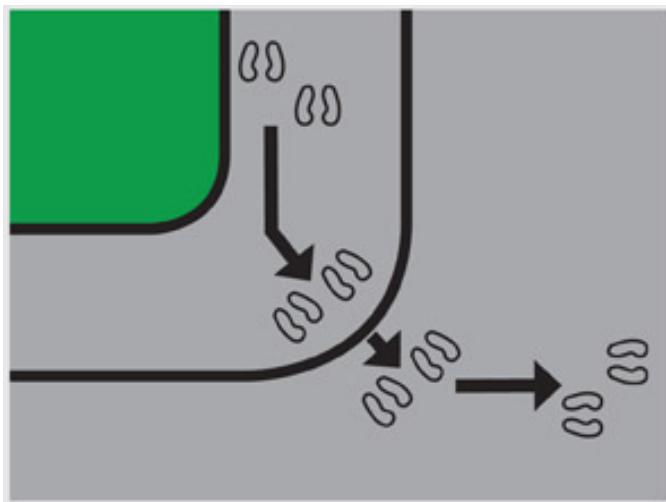
The guide and traveler can use the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique. The traveler walks two steps behind the guide instead of one.

## On Curbs

A curb is simply treated as a single step.

It is important that the guide and traveler approach all curbs (including rounded ones) perpendicularly. This will prevent the traveler from reaching the curb ahead of the guide and will ensure that they are both positioned correctly at the curb edge to step up or down safely. When negotiating rounded curbs, it may be necessary to alter one's direction of travel slightly in order to approach the curb perpendicularly and then realign after stepping up or down (see Figure 6.04).

When walking up or down a curb, the guide steps up/down and pauses; he then moves forward, allowing the traveler room to step up/down the curb behind him.



**Figure 6.04**

The footprints in this diagram show how the traveler and guide approach rounded corners perpendicularly.

## On Ramps

To indicate a change in the walking surface at each end of the ramp, the guide may simply slow his pace, he may pause momentarily, and/or give a verbal cue.

# Common Errors and Corrections

## Error:

The guide and traveler fail to approach the stairs perpendicularly.

## Correction:

Approaching the stairs perpendicularly ensures that both the traveler and guide are aligned to walk up the stairs without tripping. It also ensures that the traveler will not reach the stairs before the guide, resulting in either stubbing her toe against the first ascending riser or overstepping the edge of descending stairs.

## Error:

The traveler walks on the same step as the guide rather than one step behind.

## Correction:

Walking one step behind the guide on the stairs provides the traveler with sufficient time to react to signals from the guide or to changes in the guide's movement (e.g., when arriving at a landing, encountering unexpected people or objects on the stairway).

## Error:

The traveler walks two steps behind the guide when walking up or down the stairs.

## Correction:

Walking one step behind the guide provides her with sufficient time to react to signals from the guide or to changes in the guide's movement. Walking further behind the guide is not necessary and can be awkward.

## Error:

The guide fails to stop at the top of descending stairs before walking down them.

## Correction:

Stopping at the top of descending stairs before walking down alerts the traveler to a possible change in elevation and allows her time to react to the guide's movements.

## Error:

The guide fails to pull the traveler up to the edge of the first step before starting to walk up or down the stairs.

## Correction:

Pulling the traveler up to the edge of the first step before starting to walk up or down the stairs indicates to her the location of the first step, and it also positions her to walk up or down the stairs safely.

**Note:** When ascending stairs, the guide can bring the traveler up to the first step either by giving an arm-pull or by stepping up onto the first step and then pausing.

**Error:**

The guide fails to tense his arm when the traveler reaches the edge of the first descending step.

**Correction:**

Tensing his arm when the traveler reaches the edge of the first descending step can prevent her from overstepping the edge.

## Notes for Teachers

Some travelers find that learning to negotiate ascending stairs is less intimidating than learning to negotiate descending stairs. For this reason, it is generally recommended that instruction begin on ascending stairs and then proceed to descending stairs after the traveler has gained some skill and experience in negotiating ascending stairs. In many cases, however, it may be necessary to teach both ascending and descending concurrently in order to be able to return to the bottom of the ascending stairway for additional practice and instruction. If a ramp or elevator is available to return to the lower level, this may be an alternative, especially if the instructor feels that the traveler would have difficulty concurrently learning the methods to both ascend and descend stairs.

To make the initial teaching process easier, it may help to begin at the bottom or top of several flights of stairs. In this way it is possible to get extended, focused practice at one method before having to introduce or perform the other.

Initially, it may be helpful for the guide to tell the traveler whether the stairs go up or down; are curved, narrow, deep; etc. This verbal cueing is then gradually discontinued as the traveler gains skill and confidence in responding to signals from the guide's body. Experienced travelers can generally determine the direction of the stairs by feeling the upward or downward movement of the guide's arm. Experienced travelers will also use the guide's movement to indicate the depth and height of the stairs and will use auditory cues (e.g., pedestrian movement, changes in reflected sound) to identify aspects of the stairway, such as width, congestion, direction, and the presence of a landing.

The guide should always maintain an even pace and should not stop on stairs unless absolutely necessary. In addition to making the movement smoother on the stairs, an even pace can help to reduce or eliminate a traveler's hesitation and anxiety and can also assist with balance on the stairs. An even pace may also help keep the traveler from anticipating the end of the stairway (which, for example, can cause the traveler to stumble if she tries to step onto a landing that she has not yet reached). In some

cases, an even pace will also discourage step-counting as the traveler learns that she can rely instead on the guide's brief pause to indicate the landing.

In some environments (e.g., schools), walking on the right-hand side of the stairway keeps one in line with the general traffic flow.

For safety reasons, it is helpful to provide beginning instruction with the traveler on the side of the stairway that is nearest the railing so that the

- Traveler with extreme anxiety or physical difficulties can use the railing for support,
- Traveler can grasp the handrail, should she trip or begin to fall,
- Guide is positioned to reach across the traveler and grasp the handrail for support while helping to stabilize a traveler who may begin to fall.

Although a point of debate in the field of orientation and mobility, some professionals feel that it is best not to teach able-bodied travelers to use the handrail during initial instruction in this technique. They voice concern that some travelers will become unduly dependent on the handrail (Jacobson, 2013). These professionals recommend introducing the handrail only after the traveler has gained sufficient skill and confidence to be able to negotiate stairs without using one. Other professionals (LaGrow & Long, 2011) feel that using a handrail during initial instruction makes the process less intimidating for some travelers and that instruction can focus on negotiating stairs without using a handrail after the traveler has gained some initial skill and confidence. Regardless, it is generally best practice to position the traveler next to the railing for safety if she is apprehensive or in case she starts to fall (Hill & Ponder, 1976).

## Related Techniques

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

# **WHEN THE TRAVELER IS CARRYING A CANE**

# **BASIC GUIDING**

## **Purpose**

To travel safely and efficiently in varying environments when the traveler is carrying a cane

## **Prerequisite Techniques**

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Congested Area<sup>1</sup>

Diagonal (for Diagonal method only)

Touch (for Touch method only)

## **Teaching Environments**

Begin in a quiet, open, familiar area that is free of obstacles. The ground should be level and smooth and not require the traveler and guide to ascend or descend any steps or negotiate any doors.

Progress to quiet, controlled, unfamiliar indoor and outdoor areas in which there are obstacles to walk around. Walking around obstacles gives the traveler practice in following the guide's movement as he changes direction. Progress next to areas that have an uneven or irregular walking surface (e.g., rugs, carpet, ramps, curbs, grass). Lead up to areas that are more congested (e.g., busy hallways, cafeterias).

Practice this technique in a variety of environments (e.g., residential, small business, downtown) and situations (e.g., while the traveler and/or guide are carrying items, such as a cafeteria tray, grocery bag, books).

## **Skills**

### **Diagonal Technique**

This skill is used when the traveler chooses to rely primarily on her guide for safety, yet wishes to use the cane to obtain more environmental information than she might receive using the Vertical Position, and/or to provide some limited independent detection of obstacles or elevation changes in her path. This skill requires that the traveler already know the DIAGONAL technique.

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<sup>1</sup> When walking in a congested area, the traveler may choose to concurrently use the CONGESTED AREA technique to avoid tripping a passerby with her cane.

1. The traveler holds the cane in a modified DIAGONAL position in which the cane tip is placed in front of her foot that is nearest the guide. Placing the cane tip in front of her own foot keeps it out of the way of the guide's feet (see Figure 7.01).
  - If the cane is long enough so as not to be in the guide's way, the traveler may hold the cane in a standard diagonal position with the tip 1–2 inches outside of her body width.
  - When traveling in congested areas, the traveler should use the CONGESTED AREA technique to keep the cane tip from interfering with other pedestrians.



**Figure 7.01**

The traveler holds the cane in a modified DIAGONAL position in which the cane tip is placed in front of her own foot, the one nearest the guide.

## Touch Technique

This skill is used with inexperienced guides or any time that the traveler wants more information about the environment than she might receive using the Vertical Position or the Diagonal Technique. It is also used whenever the traveler chooses not to rely completely on the guide for her safety but prefers to have an independent means of detecting obstacles or elevation changes in her path. This skill requires that the traveler already know the TOUCH technique.

1. The traveler performs a modified TOUCH technique in which the cane's arc is narrowed on the guide's side in order to keep the tip out of the way of the guide's feet (see Figure 7.02).
  - If the cane is long enough so as not to be in the guide's way, the traveler may use the touch technique with a standard arc (1–2 inches outside of her body width).
  - When traveling in congested areas, the traveler should use the CONGESTED AREA technique to keep the cane tip from interfering with other pedestrians.



**Figure 7.02**

The traveler performs a modified TOUCH technique in which the cane's arc is narrowed on the guide's side. (The movement of the cane is shown with a two-headed arcing arrow.)

## Vertical Position

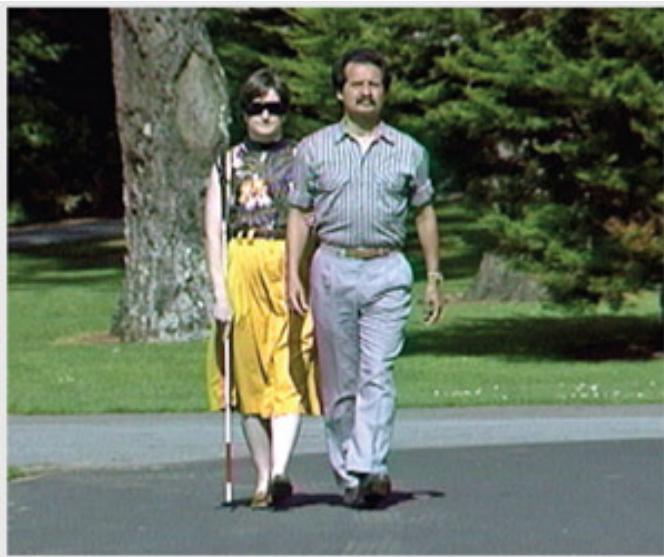
This skill is used when the traveler chooses to rely completely on her guide for safety and does not use the cane for detection of obstacles or elevation changes. This skill lessens the amount of effort the traveler needs to exert when walking with a guide, but it can only be used when walking with an experienced and competent guide.

1. The traveler can use either of two arm positions below, according to her own preference and comfort.

### Straight Arm Position

The traveler holds the cane vertically against the front of her shoulder; her arm is straight, grasping the cane at mid-shaft, with her forefinger pointing down the shaft and her palm facing backwards (see Figure 7.03). Facing her palm backward enables her to grasp the cane more securely than if she were to face her palm toward midline.

- The cane tip is held 1–4 inches above the ground, either in front of or to the side of the traveler's nearest foot.
- The crook, if present, is placed flat against the front of the traveler's shoulder and faces toward midline.



**Figure 7.03**

**Straight Arm Position:** The traveler holds the cane vertically against the front of her shoulder; her arm is straight, grasping the cane at mid-shaft, with her forefinger pointing down the shaft and her palm facing backwards.

### **Bent Arm Position**

The traveler holds the cane about 6 inches in front of her body, either at midline or just short of midline (see Figure 7.04). This position keeps the cane out of the way of pedestrians passing close by the traveler's side.

The traveler's elbow is bent to 90 degrees so that her forearm is parallel to the ground. She grasps the cane with her thumb and fingers flexed around the shaft ("shepherd grasp"), or with the pencil grasp (see Glossary). The cane tip should be held about 1–4 inches off the ground, and the crook, if present, should face toward midline. This position will keep the crook from catching on anything that it may contact.



**Figure 7.04**

**Bent Arm Position:** The traveler holds the cane about 6 inches in front of her body either at midline or just short of midline. She grasps the cane with her thumb and fingers flexed around the shaft ("shepherd grasp"), or with the pencil grasp.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### **Error:**

When using the Diagonal Technique, the traveler allows the cane tip to drift in front of the guide.

### **Correction:**

Keeping the cane tip in front of her own foot ensures that the cane will not trip the guide or get in the way of his feet.

### **Error:**

When using the Diagonal Technique, the traveler allows the cane tip to rise more than 2–4 inches above the ground.

### **Correction:**

Keeping the cane tip only 2–4 inches above the ground helps to prevent poking a nearby pedestrian with the cane tip.

### **Error:**

When using the Touch Technique, the traveler fails to narrow her arc on the guide's side.

### **Correction:**

Narrowing her arc on the guide's side ensures that the cane will not trip the guide or get in the way of his feet.

## Error:

When holding the cane in the vertical position, the traveler fails to hold the cane truly vertical.

## Correction:

Holding the cane in a vertical position keeps it out of the way of nearby pedestrians and avoids tripping them with the cane tip.

## Notes for Teachers

The choice of method depends upon the following:

- **Personal preference:** Does the traveler find one method more comfortable to perform than another?
- **Familiarity with the guide:** Does the traveler know and trust the guide? If not, she may choose to use the Touch Technique or Diagonal Technique to provide additional protection.
- **Competence of the guide:** How experienced and skilled is the guide? If the guide lacks either experience or skill, the traveler may choose to use the Touch Technique or Diagonal Technique (depending upon the environment) to provide additional protection.
- **Desire/need for additional information about the environment:** Does the traveler wish to know more about her travel path than she can detect through the guide's movements? If so, she may choose to use the Diagonal Technique (with the tip contacting the ground) or the Touch Technique to provide information about the environment (e.g., the presence of a broken sidewalk or uneven surfaces).

Alternating between methods during the course of instruction gives the traveler the opportunity to maintain her skill level with each method. It also enables her to experience using each method in different environments and over varying terrains.

## Related Techniques

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Handling Unsolicited Assistance (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Seating (Theater and Auditorium Seating and Seating with a Guide)

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

# NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES

## Purpose

To travel through narrow spaces when using the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique

## Prerequisite Techniques

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, open space in which there is room to practice this technique without contacting any obstacles.

Progress to a quiet, familiar area that has narrow spaces through which to pass (e.g., open doorways). Choose an area in which the ground is level and smooth and does not require the traveler and guide to ascend or descend any steps or to negotiate closed doors.

Progress next to areas that have an uneven or irregular walking surface (e.g., rugs, carpet, ramps, curbs, grass). Lead up to areas that are more congested (e.g., busy hallways).

Practice this technique in a variety of environments (e.g., narrow aisles, cafeterias, congested hallways, stores, theaters, restaurants, narrow stairways).

## Skill

1. Using the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique, the guide signals the traveler that they are approaching a narrow space.

The traveler positions her cane vertically or semi-vertically and close to the front of her body (see Figure 8.01) to prevent it from accidentally hitting or tripping the guide as they walk through the narrow space.

- In the semi-vertical position, the cane can be held either across the traveler's entire body width or with the tip positioned at midline.
- If the traveler is using the Diagonal or Touch Technique positions (handshake grasp) of BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane), she can most easily bring her cane into a vertical or semi-vertical position by either: (a) sliding her hand below the grip and rotating her arm inward (as though looking at a watch) to bring the cane close to her body, or (b) by changing to a pencil or shepherd grasp before moving the cane closer to her body. If the traveler has

been holding the cane with a pencil grasp, she simply moves the cane into a vertical or semi-vertical position without changing her grasp.

- If the traveler is using the Vertical Position of BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane), she will not need to modify the position of the cane, just to pull it in closer to her body.



**Figure 8.01**

The traveler positions her cane vertically or semi-vertically and close to the front of her body.

2. The traveler and guide then perform the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique through the area.
3. When the guide signals the end of the narrow space using the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique, the traveler resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to hold the cane tip close to her feet when passing through a narrow space.

### Correction:

Holding the cane in a vertical or semi-vertical position with the tip close to her feet as she passes through a narrow space prevents the cane from accidentally hitting or tripping the guide.

## **Error:**

The traveler fails to fully straighten the elbow of her grasp arm when walking behind the guide through a narrow space.

## **Correction:**

Straightening her grasp arm fully when walking behind the guide through a narrow space places the traveler at a sufficient distance behind the guide to avoid stepping on his heels or contacting him with her cane.

## **Notes for Teachers**

Until the traveler develops proficiency at manipulating the cane, it may be helpful if the guide pauses or slows his pace slightly to give the traveler extra time to position the cane before negotiating the narrow space.

Early instruction in this technique can be provided after the traveler has learned the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique (Vertical Position). Later instruction, however, will need to be delayed until the traveler has learned the Diagonal and Touch Technique methods of BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane).

## **Related Techniques**

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique will be helpful if it is ever necessary to negotiate a stairway or an escalator that is only wide enough for one person.

# REVERSING DIRECTION

## Purpose

To travel with a guide through narrow spaces when the traveler is carrying a cane

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Trailing<sup>1</sup>

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar area where there is plenty of room in which to turn around.

Progress next to areas where there is limited room to turn around (e.g., the end of a narrow hallway).

Practice this technique in a variety of environments that require the use of this skill (e.g., crowded rooms, cafeterias, restaurants, theaters, elevators, narrow hallways).

**Note:** Do not perform this technique on stairs, because it can cause the guide or the traveler to lose balance.

## Skills

### Pivot

This skill is the easiest to perform, but it requires more room to do so compared to the other skills; it is, therefore, used only in relatively spacious areas.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop.
3. The traveler pulls her cane tip close to her feet.
4. Without breaking contact, the guide and traveler make a 180-degree turn; either the guide or traveler serves as the pivot point.
  - Some travelers prefer to serve as the pivot point, as they find it disorienting to swing around the guide who is acting as the pivot point.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the TRAILING technique may assist in learning how to locate the guide's other arm by trailing across his back when reversing direction using either the Hand-Over-Hand or Scoop methods.

## **Breaking Contact**

An easy and natural-looking method for reversing direction

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop.
3. The guide rotates his arm to break contact with the traveler, or the traveler can break contact with the guide.
4. The traveler positions her cane in front of her, either vertically or semi-vertically; the traveler and guide turn around, turning toward each other.
  - Turning toward each other looks more natural than turning away from each other.
5. The traveler transfers the cane to her other hand and positions it for carrying.
6. The guide reestablishes contact with the traveler by touching her hand or forearm with the back of his hand, or the traveler can reestablish contact.
7. The guide and traveler resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Maintaining Contact**

This skill is useful for travelers who require physical support from the guide or who become fearful or disoriented when separated from the guide.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop.
3. The traveler positions her cane vertically with the tip approximately 1–4 inches above the ground and transfers it to her grasp hand.
  - Keeping the cane tip 1–4 inches above the ground enables the traveler to maintain control of it most easily during the transfer and lessens the likelihood that the cane will swing out of the vertical position.

The traveler can

- Grasp the guide's arm with the thumb and forefinger of her cane hand, holding the cane shaft with her remaining three fingers curled around it (see Figure 9.01), or
- Grasp the guide's arm with a C-shaped grasp, with the cane secured in the crook of her thumb and forefinger and held firmly against the guide's arm (see Figure 9.02).



**Figure 9.01**

The traveler grasps the guide's arm with the thumb and forefinger of her cane hand, holding the cane shaft by curling her remaining three fingers around it.



**Figure 9.02**

The traveler grasps the guide's arm with a C-shaped grasp and secures the cane between her thumb and the guide's arm.

4. The guide and traveler turn 90 degrees toward each other. As they do so, the guide can reach out with his free hand to touch the traveler's free hand. She then trails up his forearm to grasp above his elbow.
  - As another option, the traveler reaches her free arm out slightly wider than body width, then brings it in slowly to locate and grasp the guide's opposite arm.
5. The traveler releases her original grasp on the guide's arm, keeping the cane in its vertical position.

6. The guide and traveler turn another 90 degrees to complete the turn, then resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Hand-Over-Hand**

A method for reversing direction that may be especially useful for travelers who require physical support from the guide or who become fearful or disoriented when separated from the guide.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a need or desire to reverse direction.
2. The guide and traveler come to a complete stop.
3. The traveler positions her cane vertically with the tip 1–4 inches above the ground.
4. The traveler grasps the guide’s arm with her cane hand, just above her original grasp. She then releases her original grasp.
  - The traveler can grasp the guide’s arm with the thumb and forefinger of her cane hand, holding the cane shaft with her remaining three fingers curled around it (see Figure 9.03), or
  - She can grasp the guide’s arm in a C-shaped grasp, with the cane secured in the crook of her thumb and forefinger and held firmly against the guide’s arm (see Figure 9.04).



**Figure 9.03**

The traveler can grasp the guide’s arm with the thumb and forefinger of her cane hand, holding the cane shaft with her remaining three fingers curled around it.



**Figure 9.04**

She can grasp the guide's arm in a C-shaped grasp, with the cane secured in the crook of her thumb and forefinger and held firmly against the guide's arm.

5. The guide and traveler turn 90 degrees, both turning in the same direction. As they turn, the traveler reaches out slightly wider than body width with her free hand, and then she brings her hand in to locate and grasp the guide's opposite arm. Or, if she prefers, she can trail the guide's back with her free hand to locate his other arm (see Figure 9.05).
  - If the traveler trails the guide's back, she should cup her trailing hand slightly to avoid snagging the guide's clothing or hair.
  - If the guide reaches his elbow backward slightly, it will make it easier for the traveler to locate it.



**Figure 9.05**

The guide and traveler turn 90 degrees, both turning in the same direction. As they turn, the traveler can trail the guide's back with her free hand to locate his other arm.

6. The traveler releases the grasp of her cane hand on the guide's original guiding arm and reaches across to grasp his opposite arm. She then releases the grasp of her non-cane hand on this arm and transfers the cane to that hand.
  - The traveler keeps the cane vertical at all times to ensure that it does not strike the guide.
7. The guide and traveler complete the turn, then resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to position her cane vertically before turning.

### Correction:

Positioning her cane vertically before turning keeps the cane from striking the guide as they turn.

### Error:

When performing the Hand-Over-Hand method, the traveler trails the guide's back with the hand in which she is holding the cane.

### Correction:

Holding the cane in her non-trailing hand prevents the cane from poking the guide as she trails his back.

### Error:

When performing either the Hand-Over-Hand or Maintaining Contact methods, the traveler holds her cane with the tip more than 4 inches off the ground.

### Correction:

Holding her cane with the tip no more than 1–4 inches off the ground enables her to best control the cane's position and to keep it from hitting the guide.

## Notes for Teachers

As with many of the guiding techniques, travelers and guides who frequently travel together can use a pre-planned non-verbal cue to initiate this procedure.

For safety reasons, it is important not to reverse direction while on stairs.

## Related Techniques

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Seating<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around to practice going in and out of a door, especially when space on either side of the door is limited.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around on a landing to practice walking up and down the same staircase, especially when space on the landing is limited.

<sup>3</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique can be helpful, especially in theater seating, when the guide and traveler may need to turn around to return via the same aisle by which they approached their row of seats.

# TRANSFERRING SIDES

## Purpose

This technique is used to reposition oneself to stand or walk on the other side of a guide when carrying a cane. Common situations in which this technique is used include transferring to the guide's other side to reach the handrail on stairs and positioning oneself to follow the guide into a narrow row of seats in a theater or auditorium.

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Trailing<sup>1</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar area that has plenty of room in which to practice transferring sides.

Practice this technique in a variety of environments that require the use of this skill (e.g., when the traveler needs to transfer sides for ease in negotiating a doorway or stairway).

## Skills

### Scoop

This is a relatively easy method of transferring sides that requires a minimal amount of cane manipulation. Some travelers, however, find it difficult to maintain contact with the guide when performing this skill while walking.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a desire or need to change sides.
2. The traveler places her cane in a vertical position and transfers it to her grasp hand, holding the shaft between her thumb and the guide's arm. The cane tip is held 1–4 inches above the ground to enable the traveler to maintain control of it most easily during the transfer and to lessen the likelihood that the cane will swing out of the vertical position or get in the guide's way (see Figure 10.01).

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the TRAILING technique may assist the traveler in learning how to locate the guide's other arm by trailing across his back when transferring sides.



**Figure 10.01**

The traveler places her cane in a vertical position and transfers it to her grasp hand, holding the shaft between her thumb and the guide's arm. The cane tip is 1–4 inches above the ground.

3. The traveler places the back of her now free hand on the back of the guide's guiding arm, above her grasp hand; her fingers are pointed toward the guide's opposite arm, held together and curled slightly (see Figure 10.02).
  - This position of the fingers facilitates trailing across the guide's back and positions the traveler's hand to grasp the guide's opposite arm. Curling the fingers slightly ensures that the traveler's hand will not accidentally pull the guide's hair or clothing.



**Figure 10.02**

The traveler places the back of her free hand on the back of the guide's arm; her fingers are pointed toward the guide's opposite arm, held together and curled slightly.

4. The traveler releases her original grasp on the guide's arm, continuing to hold the cane in that hand. Turning 90 degrees or straightening her non-cane arm fully (to avoid stepping on the guide's heels), she then trails the guide's back with the back of her non-cane hand to locate the guide's opposite arm (see Figure 10.03).
  - The guide may reach his elbow backward to make it easier for the traveler to locate his other arm.
  - In order to maintain contact with the guide, the traveler must be certain not to release her grasp on the guide's arm before she has her other hand positioned to trail. Travelers with good kinesthetic awareness, however, may omit trailing.
  - This skill is more difficult to do when walking than when standing still. If done while walking, it may help the traveler to avoid losing contact with the guide if she moves quickly and even applies slight pressure against the guide's back as she trails. It may also help the traveler to perform the transfer more smoothly if the guide slows his pace slightly.



**Figure 10.03**

The traveler trails the guide's back to locate the guide's opposite arm.

5. The traveler grasps the guide's opposite arm just above the elbow and resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## **Hand-Over-Hand**

This skill is perhaps a bit more cumbersome than the Scoop skill presented above, especially due to the added challenge of manipulating and controlling the cane during the transfer. It can be more secure, however, because the traveler always has a firm grasp on the guide's arm. For this reason, some travelers who have a physical impairment or poor balance may prefer this skill, because it affords the most stability.

1. Either the guide or traveler indicates a desire or need to transfer sides.

2. The traveler places her cane into a vertical position and holds it with her lateral three fingers (see Figure 10.04). She then grasps the guide's arm with the thumb and forefinger of her cane hand. Some travelers may prefer to grasp the guide's arm in a C-shaped grasp, holding the cane firmly against the guide's arm (see Figure 10.05).
  - The cane is held with the tip approximately 1–4 inches above the ground. Keeping cane tip only 1–4 inches above the ground enables the traveler to maintain control of it most easily during the transfer and lessens the likelihood that the cane will swing out of the vertical position or get in the guide's way.



**Figure 10.04**

The traveler places her cane into a vertical position and holds it with her lateral three fingers. She then grasps the guide's arm with the thumb and forefinger of her cane hand.



**Figure 10.05**

Some travelers may prefer to grasp the guide's arm in a C-shaped grasp, holding the cane firmly against the guide's arm.

3. The traveler releases her original grasp on the guide's guiding arm and straightens her new grasp arm fully (to avoid stepping on his heels as she transfers sides).
4. The traveler steps behind the guide, reaching her free arm out slightly wider than body width. She then brings her arm in to locate and grasp the back of the guide's opposite arm. Or, if she prefers, she can trail the guide's back with the back of her free hand to locate his opposite arm.
  - Her trailing hand should be cupped slightly to avoid snagging the guide's clothing or hair.
  - The guide may reach his elbow backward to make it easier for the traveler to locate his arm.
5. The traveler grasps the guide's opposite arm.
6. The traveler releases the grasp of her cane hand on the guide's original guiding arm and reaches across to grasp his opposite arm. She then releases the grasp of her non-cane hand on this arm and transfers the cane to that hand.
  - The traveler keeps the cane vertical at all times to ensure that it does not strike the guide.
7. The traveler then resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

**Note:** This skill can be performed either while standing or while walking.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

When performing the Hand-Over-Hand method, the traveler holds her cane with the tip more than 1–4 inches from the ground during the transfer.

### Correction:

Holding her cane with the tip no more than 1–4 inches from the ground during the transfer enables the traveler to keep the cane from swinging and hitting the guide.

### Error:

When performing the Scoop method, the traveler trails the guide's back with the same hand that is holding the cane.

### Correction:

The traveler should hold the cane in her non-trailing hand. This keeps the cane from hitting the guide as she trails his back.

### Error:

When performing the Hand-Over-Hand method, the traveler releases her grasp on the guide's arm before grasping his arm with her other hand.

### Correction:

The traveler should not let go of her grasp on the guide's arm until she has grasped his other arm with her free hand in order to avoid losing contact with the guide. This can be especially important when performing this technique while walking.

### Error:

The traveler fails to fully extend her trailing arm.

### Correction:

Traveler must either turn 90 degrees (Scoop) or extend her trailing arm fully so that she does not step on the guide's heels when transferring sides.

## Notes for Teachers

Many of the same reasons for using this technique were those mentioned under TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane).

Because this technique is easier to perform while standing than while walking, it is helpful to first practice this technique while stationary. After the traveler has learned to perform it correctly while the guide stands still, she can better learn to do it while she and the guide are walking.

It is never advised to transfer sides during a turn or when walking up or down stairs. Doing so makes the technique more difficult to perform; when done on stairs, it can also cause the guide or the traveler to lose his or her footing.

## Related Techniques

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Seating<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The traveler can use the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique to move to the other side of the guide in order to be next to the handrail of the stairway or escalator.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the traveler to learn how to position herself behind the guide in order to negotiate a door when she is on the latch side of the door.

<sup>3</sup> The traveler can use the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique to move to the proper side of the guide in order to enter a row of theater seats.

# NEGOTIATING DOORS

## Purpose

To negotiate closed doors when the traveler is carrying a cane

## Prerequisite Techniques

Negotiating Doors—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>1</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a familiar area that is quiet and free from a lot of pedestrian traffic. For initial instruction, use indoor, lightweight, self-closing doors, where wind and other weather factors will not interfere with teaching, and where there are no steps to walk up or down immediately before or after going through the doorway.

- Lightweight self-closing doors are especially important when working with very young or elderly travelers, who may lack the strength to handle a heavy door.

Gradually progress to areas that have heavier, self-closing doors, including those that lead to the outside.

Give the traveler experience with many different doors. Introduce her to both manual-closing doors and self-closing doors, to doors that open to the right and those that open to the left, to doors that present a variety of doorknobs and handles, and to doors that are placed closely in sequence (e.g., at entrances to some stores or hotels, especially in colder climates). Also introduce the traveler to doorways that have a step going either up or down immediately before or after the doorway.

Lastly, practice the technique in areas where there is heavier pedestrian traffic.

The following are some tips for making the initial teaching process easier:

- Use a set of double doors. This enables one to teach push/pull doors without requiring the traveler to transfer sides after passing through the doorway.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around to practice negotiating a door, especially when space on either side of the door is limited.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the traveler to learn how to position herself behind the guide in order to negotiate a door when she is on the latch side of the door.

- Use doors that have windows in order to see pedestrians approaching from the other side.

## Skills

### Traveler on the Hinge Side

To negotiate a closed door when the traveler is on the hinge side

1. The guide and traveler approach the door perpendicularly.
2. The guide places the traveler in the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position and opens the door.
3. When the guide opens the door, the traveler slides her hand to a point just below the cane grip and positions the cane vertically.
  - If the traveler has been holding the cane with a handshake grasp, she can rotate her arm inward to bring the cane to a vertical position before transferring it to her other hand (see Figure 11.01), or she can change to a pencil grasp before bringing the cane to the vertical position (see Figure 11.02).



**Figure 11.01**

The traveler rotates her arm inward to bring the cane to a vertical position before transferring it to her other hand.



**Figure 11.02**

The traveler changes to a pencil grasp before bringing the cane to the vertical position.

4. The traveler transfers the cane to her grasp hand, keeping the tip 1–4 inches off the ground.

- The traveler can hold the cane vertically with her three lateral fingers while grasping the guide's arm with her thumb and forefinger (see Figure 11.03), or she may prefer to hold the cane between her thumb and the guide's arm (see Figure 11.04).
- Keeping her cane tip only 1–4 inches above the ground enables the traveler to maintain control of it most easily and lessens the likelihood that the cane will swing out of the vertical position or get in the guide's way.



**Figure 11.03**

The traveler holds the cane vertically with her three lateral fingers while grasping the guide's arm with her thumb and forefinger.



**Figure 11.04**

The traveler holds the guide's arm with a standard C-shaped grasp and secures the cane between her thumb and the guide's arm.

5. The traveler and guide perform the NEGOTIATING DOORS—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique.
6. After passing through the doorway, the traveler resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## Traveler on the Latch Side

To negotiate a closed door when the traveler is on the latch side

1. The guide and traveler approach the door perpendicularly.
2. The guide places the traveler in the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) position and opens the door.
3. When the guide opens the door, the traveler slides her hand to a point just below the cane grip and positions the cane vertically, keeping the tip 1–4 inches off the ground.
4. Holding the cane just below the grip with her middle, ring, and little fingers curled around the shaft (see Figure 11.03, above), the traveler grasps the guide's arm with the thumb and index finger of her cane hand.
  - Holding the cane with the tip 1–4 inches above the ground enables the traveler to maintain control of the cane while performing the partial transfer and lessens the likelihood that the cane will swing out of the vertical position or get in the guide's way.
5. The traveler and guide perform the NEGOTIATING DOORS—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique.
6. After passing through the doorway, the traveler and guide resume the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## General Modifications

If the traveler wishes to catch the door with her cane hand, she can perform the following modification:

- Instead of placing the cane in the hand that is grasping the guide's arm, the traveler slides her hand to a point just below the cane grip and moves the cane to a vertical position with the tip 1–4 inches above the ground. Bending her wrist to keep the cane away from contact with the door, she then catches the door with the back of her forearm (see Figure 11.05). She could also catch the door with the back of her hand (Figure 11.06), or the side of her hand (see Figure 11.07).

**Note:** This requires less manipulation of the cane, and some travelers may find it useful in situations where it may be awkward to hold the cane against the guide's arm (e.g., when the guide is wearing a heavy coat). It is, however, often difficult to keep the cane from hitting the door when performing this modification and so it is not recommended unless circumstances prevent the traveler from performing the standard technique.



**Figure 11.05**

To catch the door with her cane hand, the traveler bends her wrist to keep the cane shaft away from contact with the door and catches the door with the back of her forearm.



**Figure 11.06**

The traveler catches the door with the back of her hand.



**Figure 11.07**

The traveler catches the door with the side of her hand.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The traveler fails to hold her cane vertically when holding it in the hand that is grasping the guide's arm.

### Correction:

Holding her cane vertically prevents it from either interfering with the guide's movement or contacting other pedestrians.

**Error:**

The traveler holds the cane with its tip more than 1–4 inches off the ground.

**Correction:**

Holding the cane with its tip no more than 1–4 inches off the ground enables the traveler to maintain maximum control of the cane’s position while negotiating the doorway with the guide.

## Notes for Teachers

When first introducing this technique, it is often helpful to have the traveler practice manipulating the cane while standing still before she tries to do so while negotiating an actual door with a guide.

Until the traveler develops proficiency at manipulating the cane, it may be helpful if the guide pauses or slows his pace slightly in order to give the traveler extra time to position the cane before she needs to assume the weight of the door.

When initially teaching this technique, it may be helpful to verbally indicate the direction in which the door opens and if it is a pull or push door. This assist, however, should be faded as the traveler learns to identify direction in which the door opens by feeling the movement of the guide’s body.

## Related Techniques

Negotiating Doors (Without a Guide)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prior experience negotiating doors using the NEGOTIATING DOORS—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique may sometimes lessen the initial anxiety that some travelers feel when negotiating doors using a long cane, but when traveling without a guide.

# NEGOTIATING STAIRS

## Purpose

To ascend and descend stairs when the traveler is carrying a cane

## Prerequisite Techniques

Basic Guiding (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Contacting & Exploring Objects<sup>1</sup>

Diagonal (for Diagonal method only)

Negotiating Narrow Spaces (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>2</sup>

Negotiating Stairs—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane)

Reversing Direction (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>3</sup>

Transferring Sides (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)<sup>4</sup>

## Teaching Environments

Begin in a quiet, familiar or semi-familiar area. The stairway should consist of the following features:

- It should be a single set of stairs with a landing that is large enough to allow the traveler to take a few steps before she needs to perform another skill (e.g., negotiate a doorway or reverse direction).
- The steps are consistent in depth, height, and width and are not curved.
- There are 8–15 steps per set. This number is enough to achieve a comfortable rhythm with the guide, while not being so many that most travelers will tire quickly. When possible, the number of steps should be too many for the traveler to count easily. It is important that the traveler not count stairs, but, rather, learn to focus on signals from the guide to indicate their arrival at the landing.
- There should be a handrail (or not), depending on the traveler's need and preference. Initially, if a handrail is used, it should extend the entire length of the stairway rather than start or end at the second or third step to avoid confusing the traveler about the location of the first step and the landing.

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<sup>1</sup> The CONTACTING & EXPLORING OBJECTS portion of this technique is used when the traveler's cane contacts the first step. It enables her to maintain safe and effective cane contact with the first step as she walks up to it.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the NEGOTIATING NARROW SPACES—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique will be helpful if it is ever necessary to negotiate stairs that are only wide enough for one person.

<sup>3</sup> Knowing the REVERSING DIRECTION—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the guide and traveler to turn around to practice walking up and down the same staircase, especially when space on the landing is limited.

<sup>4</sup> Knowing the TRANSFERRING SIDES (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique makes it easier for the traveler to move to the other side of the guide to be next to the handrail, if needed.

Progress next to negotiating a variety of stairs, with and without handrails, depending upon traveler needs and preferences, and including those with the following features:

- Variety in length
- Several flights
- Varying amounts of traction (e.g., with or without rubber runners, polished stone, carpeted)
- Variety in depth, height, and/or width
- Curved

## Skills

### Ascending Stairs

To negotiate ascending stairs when the traveler is not carrying a cane

1. Using the NEGOTIATING STAIRS—Ascending (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique, the guide and traveler walk up to the first step.
2. When the traveler's cane tip contacts the first riser, she slides her hand down the shaft of the cane and anchors the cane against the riser using the CONTACTING & EXPLORING OBJECTS technique. She walks with the guide up to the first step.
  - If the traveler's cane has not located the riser of the first step, the guide can give an arm-pull to bring the traveler closer to the first step, and/or he can verbally indicate to the traveler that they are at the bottom of a set of ascending stairs.

### Modifications

When walking with an experienced traveler who responds quickly to signals from the guide and who is not fearful of stairs, the guide may choose to not come to a complete stop before beginning to walk up the stairs (Ascending Stairs: No Pause method). This modification saves time, but for safety reasons, it should only be used with proficient travelers.

- If the traveler carries her cane using the handshake grasp, the guide may need to pause at the bottom of the stairs just long enough for the traveler to place her cane in the proper position to climb the stairs; less time is needed for travelers who hold their cane using a pencil or shepherd grasp.

If the traveler has been carrying her cane in the Vertical position (see BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane), she can either

- Position the cane as described above, or
- Keep the cane in the vertical position with the cane tip next to the side of her foot and maintain this position while walking up the stairs (see Figure 12.01).



**Figure 12.01**

The traveler maintains the cane in the vertical position, with the cane tip next to the side of her foot.

3. The traveler positions the cane tip against the riser of the second or third step (depending on personal comfort), 1 inch below the edge. The traveler holds the cane either vertically or semi-vertically with her arm parallel to the ground.
  - It is important that the traveler maintain the cane in a vertical or semi-vertical position (no wider than her body width) so that it is out of the way of the guide's feet.
4. The guide and traveler climb the stairs using the NEGOTIATING STAIRS—Ascending (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique. As they do so, the traveler maintains the cane tip 1–2 steps ahead and allows it to lightly contact each riser. As she walks, the traveler should do the following:
  - She should keep her weight forward and over the balls of her feet, for balance.
  - She should keep the cane in a constant position 1–2 steps ahead of her, so that it does not get in the way of her feet as she climbs the stairs and so it will reliably cue the traveler when she has reached the landing (see Figure 12.02).
  - She should keep her cane arm extended, allowing the forward and upward movement of her body to move the cane tip forward to lightly contact the riser of each successive step.
    - If the cane tip bounces excessively as it contacts each riser, the traveler can correct this by applying slight forward pressure of the cane tip against the riser (but not so much as to move the cane out of its vertical or semi-vertical position).
  - She does not let her arm drop (allowing the cane shaft to contact each riser rather than just the cane tip). Were this to happen, she would need to lift the cane to the next step, thereby decreasing the fluidity and ease of movement with which she can climb the stairs.



**Figure 12.02**

The traveler keeps the cane in a constant position 1–2 steps ahead of her.

5. To signal arrival at the landing, the guide may either give an arm-pull as the traveler's first foot contacts the landing or may pause while the traveler climbs the last step. The traveler will also know that she has only 1–2 more steps to reach the landing when her cane tip no longer contacts a riser ahead of her.
  - As the traveler climbs the last step or two, she can clear the landing with the cane; clearing enables her to detect any objects or other environmental features (e.g., additional stairs) in her immediate path.
6. At the landing, the traveler resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.
  - Because the traveler slid her hand down to the bottom of the grip when performing the CONTACTING & EXPLORING OBJECTS technique, she will need to reestablish her grasp at the top of the grip. She can do so by quickly sliding the cane forward through her loose grasp and then grasping the grip firmly at the top of the grip as it slides through her hand (see Figures 12.03a, 12.03b, and 12.03c)
  - Some travelers may need to finish ascending all stairs and feel secure on the landing before they can manipulate the cane to return it to its original carrying (handshake) position. The guide may need to stop, pause, or slow his pace while the traveler does this.



**Figure 12.03a**

The traveler reestablishes her grasp at the top of the grip.



**Figure 12.03b**

To reestablish her grasp, she first quickly slides the cane forward through her loose grasp.



**Figure 12.03c**

The traveler then grasps the grip firmly at the top of the grip as it slides through her hand.

## Descending Stairs

To negotiate descending stairs

1. Using the NEGOTIATING STAIRS—Descending (When the Traveler Is Not Carrying a Cane) technique, the guide and traveler walk up to the first step.
  - The traveler locates the edge of the first step with the cane tip. She anchors her cane shaft in a midline position against the edge of the top step. This gives the traveler a reference point to know exactly where the edge of the step is located.
2. The guide pulls his arm forward (arm-pull) to bring the traveler up to the edge of the top step and then tenses his arm to prevent her from overstepping the edge. The traveler anchors her cane shaft against the edge of the top step and walks up to it.
3. The traveler places her cane in the BASIC GUIDING—Diagonal (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position in which the cane tip is held with the tip suspended 1–2 inches above the edge of the first or second step below, depending on the length of the cane (see Figure 12.04).
  - If she wishes, the traveler can use the Tread Method or Edge Method of using her cane on the stairs instead of holding the cane with the tip above the edge of a lower step (see Long Cane Module: Stairs With a Cane Technique).



**Figure 12.04**

The cane tip is held 1–2 inches above the edge of the first or second step below, depending on the length of the cane.

4. The traveler follows one step behind the guide as they walk down the stairs. As she walks, the traveler does the following:
  - She maintains her trunk erect (not leaning backward), placing her weight over her heels, for optimum balance. Leaning the trunk backward does not improve

one's balance and doing so can elevate the arm, altering the proper position of the cane.

- She holds her cane firmly in position.
  - Allowing the cane tip to rise while walking down a set of stairs can delay the tip's contact with the landing and can position the cane to interfere with other people on the stairs.
  - Allowing the cane tip to drop while descending can cause it to contact a lower stair (which can be mistaken for the landing) and can interfere with the momentum of the guide and traveler as they descend the stairs.
- 5. When the cane tip contacts the landing, the traveler clears with her cane as she walks down the last step or two. At the landing, the traveler resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.
  - Clearing the landing allows the cane to detect any objects or other environmental features (e.g., additional stairs) in her path.
  - The guide may also pause or give a slight arm-pull at the moment that the traveler places her first foot on the landing, to give additional confirmation that she is at the landing.

## Using the Handrail

For use by travelers who need to use the handrail for support or who wish to use it for any reason

1. After walking up to the first step, the traveler transfers the cane to her hand that is grasping the guide's arm, placing the cane between her thumb and the guide's arm (see Figure 12.05).
  - When ascending stairs, the cane tip should be positioned 8–10 inches above the ground so that it does not catch on the steps.
2. The traveler locates the railing by reaching her free arm forward and to the side in an arc from thigh to mid-chest height with her arm fully extended (see Figure 12.05).

Railings are not present on all sets of stairs. Unless the traveler needs the railing for physical support or for another reason, it is important to encourage the traveler to eventually have confidence in his or her ability to negotiate stairs without using the railing in order to avoid developing any unnecessary dependence on railings.

It is also important to keep in mind that railings are often irregular—sometimes stopping short of or extending beyond the stairs.



**Figure 12.05**

The traveler frees her cane hand to grasp the railing by transferring the cane to her other hand and placing it between her thumb and the guide's arm. The traveler then locates the railing by reaching her free arm forward and to the side, in an arc (indicated here with a white arrow) from thigh to mid-chest height.

3. After negotiating the stairs, the traveler removes the cane from her grasp hand and resumes the BASIC GUIDING (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) position.

## Common Errors and Corrections

### Error:

The guide and traveler fail to approach the stairs perpendicularly.

### Correction:

Approaching the stairs perpendicularly ensures that the traveler will not reach the stairs before the guide, thus preventing her from stubbing her toe against the riser of the first ascending step or falling off the edge of the first descending step. Also, depending upon the angle of approach and how the traveler holds her cane (e.g., vertical position when approaching ascending stairs or tip off of the ground when approaching descending stairs), there is no guarantee that her cane will find either the riser or edge of the first step before her feet do.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to hold her cane consistently 1–2 steps ahead.

**Correction:**

Keeping her cane tip consistently 1–2 steps ahead at all times ensures that it will provide forward coverage while not interfering with her movement. It will also ensure that the traveler will have time to react when the cane detects the landing.

**Error:**

The traveler holds the cane so that the tip extends further than her body width.

**Correction:**

Holding the cane so that the tip extends no further than her body width provides forward protection without interfering with the guide's movement.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to lower her grasp on the cane to a point just below the grip before ascending the stairs.

**Correction:**

Holding the cane below the grip will enable her to reach her arm forward and to place the cane tip against the riser 1 inch below the edge of the first or second step ahead without having to hold her arm uncomfortably high.

**Error:**

The traveler fails to hold her cane so that only the tip touches the riser only 1 inch below the edge of the first or second step ahead as she ascends the stairs.

**Correction:**

Holding her cane so that just the tip touches below the edge of the first or second step ahead enables the upward movement of her body to move the cane to the step ahead without her needing to actively lift the cane to clear each step.

**Error:**

The guide fails to stop at the top of descending stairs before starting to walk down.

**Correction:**

Stopping at the top of descending stairs alerts the traveler to a change in elevation and also provides her with sufficient time to align at the edge of the top step and position her cane before walking down. Even though the traveler is holding a cane, this does not guarantee that she will find the edge of the first step independently (especially if she is holding the cane with the tip off of the ground).

**Error:**

The guide fails to pull the traveler up to the edge before starting to walk down.

**Correction:**

Pulling the traveler up to the edge before starting to walk down tells the traveler exactly where the edge of the first step is located and positions her to walk down the stairs safely.

**Error:**

The traveler lets her cane tip drift higher than 1–2 inches above the steps below while descending the stairs.

**Correction:**

Holding the cane tip no higher than 1–2 inches above the steps below helps to ensure that the cane will accurately detect the landing and that it will not poke people on the stairs.

## Notes for Teachers

Some travelers find that learning to negotiate ascending stairs is less intimidating than learning to negotiate descending stairs. For this reason, it is generally recommended to begin instruction on ascending stairs and then proceed to descending stairs. In many cases, however, it will be necessary to teach both ascending and descending concurrently in order to be able to return to the bottom of the ascending stairway for additional practice and instruction. If a ramp or elevator is available to return to the lower level, however, this may be an alternative, especially if the instructor feels that the traveler would have difficulty concurrently learning the methods to both ascend and descend stairs.

- To make the initial teaching process easier, it may help to begin at the bottom or top of several flights of stairs. In this way it is possible to get extended, focused practice with one method before having to introduce or perform the other.

Initially, it may be helpful for the guide to tell the traveler whether the stairs go up or down and/or are curved, narrow, deep, etc. This verbal cueing is then gradually discontinued as the traveler gains skill and confidence. Experienced travelers generally do not need verbal cueing and generally can determine the direction of the stairs by feeling the upward or downward movement of the guide's arm. Experienced travelers will also use the guide's movement to indicate the depth and height of the stairs and will use auditory cues (e.g., pedestrian movement, changes in reflected sound) to identify aspects of the stairway, such as width, congestion, direction, and the presence of a landing.

Until the traveler develops proficiency at manipulating the cane, it may be helpful if the guide pauses or slows his pace slightly to give the traveler extra time to correctly position the cane at the beginning and end of each stairway.

The guide should always maintain an even pace and should not stop on stairs (unless absolutely necessary). In addition to making the movement smoother on the stairs, an even pace can help to reduce or eliminate a traveler's hesitation and anxiety and can also assist balance on the stairs. An even pace may also help keep the traveler from anticipating the end of the stairway (which, for example, can cause the traveler to stumble if she tries to step onto a landing that she has not yet reached). In some cases, an even pace will also discourage step-counting as the traveler learns that she can rely instead on the guide's brief pause to indicate the landing.

In some environments (e.g., schools), walking on the right-hand side of the stairway keeps one in line with the general traffic flow.

## Related Techniques

Escalators—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane)

Negotiating Stairs<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prior experience negotiating stairs using the NEGOTIATING STAIRS—With a Guide (When the Traveler Is Carrying a Cane) technique may lessen the initial anxiety that some travelers feel when negotiating stairs without a guide.

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